



DEFENDERS

Spring-summer 2011



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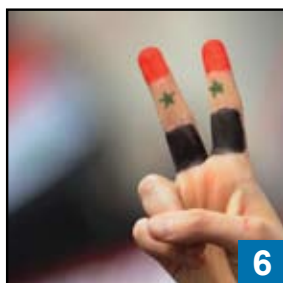


DEFENDERS

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Editorial

No one would perhaps have believed that in 2011, through a series of momentous and surprising developments in a number of Arab countries would become a very significant and unforgettable year in the field of human rights. Although the Human Rights Council from five years ago had selected 2011 as a year to make achievements and evaluate its weakness and strengths, but sheer momentum of the developments in Arab countries were such that not only they affected the UPR, but for the first time the country human rights situation monitoring became centre of attention of the Council. The requests for the setting up of fact finding committees to review human rights violation claims in Libya and Syria, also the active role of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in establishing communication between the Council and the Security Council which were highlighted with her reports on the Ivory Coast and Syria, alongside the active actions of Arab countries in reviewing violation claims in Libya, Yemen and Syria all of which are deemed as active members in the Arab group, are all excellent characteristics of a new round of Council activities.

Despite all these however, the Council's reaction towards reviewing the grave human rights violations in Bahrain which took place at the same time as the events in Egypt, Libya and Yemen, was very disheartening for many human rights organizations and activists, and the sentiments that apparently the omission of the political procedures in human rights reviews in the UN is just a wish were reignited again, something that requires further rigorous efforts.

With this approach, in its new round of activities the ODVV tries to while carefully observing and monitoring the human rights developments of the region, to pursue its primary mission which is the promotion and improvement of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. For this purpose the latest edition of Defenders has been compiled with this aim and this newsletter includes a list of practical human rights actions, trainings and researchers which have been selected for increasing public awareness of human rights for the authorities and the people have been included in this issue of Defenders. The ODVV's observation of human rights violations in Arab countries, and the Arab Spring Development alongside a study on Iran's views on human rights and the newly appointed Special Rapporteur for Iran within Iran and the Human Rights Council are some of the subjects covered in this issue.

While endearing the Human Rights Council's activities and measures in human rights the ODVV hopes that with the start of the second round of Council activities and UPRs that have taken place that this human rights body shows its best function and positive influence at the highest levels and with enough attention to the equality, universality and non-selectivity of all human rights. Undoubtedly towards this path, not only the ODVV will concentrate all its implementation and research efforts in assisting the Council's UPRs, but also the Council will extend a hand of cooperation towards other sister NGOs too.

Editorial

Iran, West and Human Rights: Is Compromise Impossible?

■ Mahmoud Reza Golshanpazhooh (Ph.D.)



In the last day of its latest meeting, the Human Rights Council finally appointed Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the former foreign minister of Maldives, as special human rights rapporteur on Iran. Western countries' support for the former Muslim foreign minister greatly helped him overtake two other contestants for the post: the former Italian ambassador to Iran and a Sudanese human rights lawyer.

Appointment of the rapporteur followed adoption of a resolution in April 2011, which was approved by the Human Rights Council through 22 ayes, 7 nays and 14 abstentions according to which a special rapporteur was to oversee situation of human rights in Iran.

A glimpse at Mr. Shaheed's biography will introduce him a liberal person. He is a graduate of doctoral course in international relations from Queensland University. As foreign minister of Maldives, his country acceded to the highest number of international human rights instruments and also acceded to the Human Rights Council. Most interestingly, he was given Muslim Democrat of the Year Award in 2009 by Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID). He also managed in 2005 to rescind a former decision by the Maldives' High Council of Islamic Affairs for the rejection of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Official stances taken by the Iranian authorities just a few days after his appointment proves that Iran will not allow him into the country. Of course, this does not mean that the Islamic Revolution has no intention to cooperate in this regard or answer his questions, but

a visit to Iran by him in the coming years is currently out of the question.

To understand the reason why Iran is opposed to this process, one should first understand Iran's approach to human rights and their attitude toward the concept of human rights throughout the post-revolution years. Why has Iran described appointment of a special human rights rapporteur (whether he is Western or non-Western, Muslim or non-Muslim) as interference in its internal affairs? Why do Iranian officials believe that human rights are being used as a Trojan horse to allow the West to undermine the Islamic system and therefore, insist on their position in spite of possible costs it entails? Is this the result of a chronic and unreasonable skepticism on the part of Iran or a sign of Iran's fear from the international system? Or the situation is more complicated and Iran has its own reasons and as long as it is not offered a logical argument, the country will not be able to take a positive approach to the issue of human rights?

The following points will be helpful when answering these questions.

Firstly, the dominant idea in Iran is that human rights positions taken against the country are part of long-term, premeditated, and calculated measures by the West and countries which have been at loggerheads with the Iranian system since its very inception. According to this viewpoint, during the past 30 years, the West has easily ignored arguments offered by the Iranian side. Meanwhile, regardless of the double standards applied to human rights, Western countries have

been using human rights as a means of putting pressure on Iran and will continue to do so. This opinion has many supporters in Iran who mention the West's treatment of other countries where the human rights situation is much worse than Iran. Despite dire situation of human rights in those countries, the West needs them for economic reasons and ignores human rights abuses there. Untenable approach taken by the West to Palestinians' rights has also made them conclude that the whole issue of human rights is nothing but a political ploy. So, they believe that any retreat on the human rights front will cause the West to progress in all fronts in order to destabilize the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As said before, this viewpoint, which is also rife in other countries of the Third World, is not only advocated by state officials, but by a large part of the public that is not very optimistic about human rights intentions of the West.

Take this example. The London-based Daily Telegraph published a Wikileaks cable in February 2011 (1) which carried detailed account of a conversation between Democracy and Human Rights Department of the British Foreign Office and (probably) US ambassador in London. The cable clearly proved that the United States and UK were in collusion to use the Universal Periodic Review mechanism to put human rights pressure on Iran in cooperation with their allies and pave the way for the appointment of a human rights rapporteur to investigate human rights situation in the country. Therefore, the above viewpoint is also backed by documentary evidence. The West's dawdling in dealing with Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against Iran's military forces and civilians during eight years of Imposed War is another argument used against the West's approach to "defending the human rights."

Secondly, this approach can also be seen in Iran's diplomatic activities. Before approval of the Human Rights Council's resolution on special rapporteur, an argument offered by the Iranian delegation which was also repeated by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and by other countries like Cuba and China, was the hostile and political nature of the whole process. Iran correctly argued that when a powerful mechanism like Universal Periodic Review is in gear to assess all human rights details of a country, there is no reason to travel back in time and reactivate special rapporteurs system. On the oth-



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er hand, although the West claims that human rights should be dealt with in its totality, in practice, human rights only becomes important and comes to the fore when Western states have political problems with a certain country. Thus, they are prone to easily ignoring human rights advances made by that country and simply insist on those cases which are of importance to them. In fact, they arrange the stage in such a way that it seems human rights are being violated only in a single part of the Earth which is the country in question.

On the whole, as long as Iran and the West fail to reach a common understanding of human rights and also converge on real or political nature of supervisory mechanisms such as the so-called "name & shame" policy, this war of attrition will continue without getting anywhere. This claim has already been upheld by the experiences gained in the past 30 years.

Note:

(1) Demarche Delivered: UK Wants to Use UPR to Pressure IRAN on Human Rights, cited in: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/wikileaks-files/london-wikileaks/8304882/C-DEMARCHE-DELIVERED-UK-WANTS-TO-USE-UPR-TO-PRESSURE-IRAN-ON-HUMAN-RIGHTS.html>

*Links for Further Reading:

1- Iran and Special Human Rights Rapporteur By: Mahmoud Reza Golshanpazhooh: http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran_and_Special_Human_Rights_Rapporteur.htm

2- Shifting Pressure from Nuclear Case to Human Rights By: Davoud Hermidas Bavand http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Shifting_Pressure_from_Nuclear_Case_to_Human_Rights.htm

Human Rights in the Arab World: A Regional Perspective



■ **Mohammad Javad Javid, PhD - Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of Tehran**
■ **Esmat Shahmoradi - Member of the Committee for Civil and Political Rights (ODVV)**

The premise of this regional review of the human rights violations in the Arab world is that the wide variety of strategies for the effective protection of these rights should always be determined and implemented in specific local, regional and global context. The paradox of self-regulation by the state in the definition and implementation of human rights standards, as with case of Saudi Arabia discussed below, would emphasize the role of civil society. At all levels of analysis and action, one should seek to combine the best possible immediate response to specific problems with long term strategies for addressing the root causes and structural factors in the persistence of human rights violations.

At least one third of all Arab states have so far failed to ratify any of the basic human rights treaties. Yet, as can be seen below, even those who have a relatively good record of ratification continue to strongly resist compliance with the requirements of international supervision and accountability.

It is globally known that the governments of developing countries are more responsive to international pressure for the protection of human rights in their countries, than to activities of local NGOs and other actors within their own societies. Accordingly, international human rights NGOs tend to monitor human rights violations in developing countries, with indispensable help of local NGOs, but publicize their findings in order to influence Western governments to pressure the governments of developing countries to protect human rights in their respective countries.

As a regional review of human rights violations, this paper seeks to discuss the nature of the states under study, in their own contexts, the role of internal and external actors, the economic dimensions, legitimate security concerns, and other underlying causes of human rights violations. The overview of violations in this area should be seen in light of elements of both unity and diversity in the Arab world, as well as some political, security and re-

lated factors in the recent history of the region as a whole. For space limitations, in this article we restrict our review to recent human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Somalia.

Human rights issues in Saudi Arabia

Although it is difficult to discuss all issues involving human rights in Saudi Arabia, some major issues are as follows:

a. Women

While women were encouraged in recent years to come forward to enjoy their rights as human beings, the authorities recently decided not to allow Saudi women to participate in the municipal elections now but rather “in due course”. This delay essentially means that at least half of Saudi citizens are being deprived of their basic rights and will continue to be marginalized. Women are not allowed to travel alone, they are denied managerial posts, and can’t even become school headmistresses. In 2009, during Saudi Arabia’s human rights review at the UN, the government promised to revise the “male guardianship” system that limits women’s freedom of movement. Two years later, this freedom is yet to be secured.

b. Political and civil rights

Minority rule over the majority Saudi population goes on with a social class and religious approach to the human rights violation of religious minorities. According to figures the Wahabi sect only makes up 20 percent of the population, yet it has all the power wealth and government institutions under its control.

The United States and other western countries cannot deny human rights violations in Arabia, and according to WikiLeaks, US administrations have always had differences with Riyadh over the country’s human rights conditions. Nevertheless they continue to support the oppressive regime in Saudi Arabia. While Saudi Arabia is dependent on American technical and security support, Western dependence on the oil of this country makes it less vulnerable to pressure by Western governments about its human rights performance. The combination of selective use of human rights rhetoric and inconsistent practice of Western governments tends to undermine the moral authority of human rights activists in a region like the Arab world.



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c. Saudi Arabia’s anti-terrorism law: Problematic definitions of terrorism

The Saudi Arabian government considers deeming criticism of the royal family a “terrorist” act, which will pose a serious threat to freedom of expression in the kingdom.

The law was drafted as “part of the Kingdom’s efforts in the fight against terrorism and its finances.” The draft law imposes a minimum 10-year jail sentence for anyone who criticises the royal family. It would also categorise “endangering national unity” and “harming the reputation of the state” as terrorism crimes. Saudi officials guarantee the law would be used against “militants”. However, the law is too broad and peaceful protesters could be targeted.

The flaws of the draft counterterrorism law can be summed up under the following categories, all of which in some way would seriously undermine the protection of human rights if implemented: problematic definitions of terrorism; broad restrictions on rights to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and association; excessive police and prosecutorial pow-



ers, infringing on the right to privacy; and intrusions on the independence of the courts and on the right to a fair trial.

A realistic and desirable approach here is to seek to diminish the negative consequences of the paradox of self-regulation by the state through the infusion of the human rights ethos into the fabric of the state itself and the global context in which it operates. Accordingly, it is urgent that Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah withdraw the draft counterterrorism law from consideration by the cabinet. As suggested by human rights authorities, the government should consult with international human rights experts to draft a new counterterrorism law that would protect rather than infringe on basic rights.

Human rights in Bahrain

While human rights activists in the world are necessarily implicated in political controversy, the Arab human rights movement suffers from extensive politicization due to several factors. The dominance of certain ideological bias is a problem, which is often reflected in profound disagreements relating to human rights issues in the Arab world.

This extensive abuse of human rights is very much the case with the current disasters in Bahrain. Bahrain's record on human rights has deteriorated sharp-

ly in the latter half of 2010. Among other things, the government of Bahrain has been accused of marginalizing the native majority Shi'a Muslim population, and torturing and mistreating political prisoners to extract confessions. The crackdown on protesters during the 2011 Arab Spring has brought further human rights complaints, including the destruction of dozens of long-standing Shiite mosques.

While Islam is often assumed to be a major factor in the presumed unity of "Arab culture", there are some strong differences in the way it is understood and practiced in various parts of the region, especially in terms of its relationship to the state and public life. Sunni Islam is dominant in all the member states, except Bahrain where the Shi'a are the majority. The Shi'a may also be a majority in Iraq, and there are important Shi'a minorities in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

Over 70% of the population of Bahrain are Shi'a Muslims. The Sunni elite treats Shi'ites as an underclass, limiting them primarily to manual labor and denying them a fair share of state resources. Bahrain is practicing a form of sectarian apartheid by not allowing Shiites to hold key government posts or serve in the police or military. In fact, the security forces are staffed by Sunnis from Syria, Pakistan, and Baluchistan who also get fast-tracked to Bahraini citi-



The profound ambivalence of Arab states to the protection of human rights is clearly reflected in the aggressively hostile position of these governments towards human rights NGOs

zenship, much to the displeasure of the indigenous Shiite population. Shiites and “some Sunnis of Persian origins” are banned from residing in the city of Riffa where only the Sunni Muslims are permitted to live.

There are also concerns of the Bahraini government's systematic efforts to diminish the Shi'a majority by promotion of immigration of Sunni Muslims and granting them citizenship. There is the problem of political naturalization. The ruling family, where you have a minority ruling a majority, wants to change the demographic situation of the country.

Since mid-March 2011 Bahrain has been carrying out a punitive and vindictive campaign of violent repression against its own citizens. This fierce repression has been characterized by widespread arbitrary arrests, credible allegations of torture and ill-treatment, apparently coerced televised “confessions”, unfair trials, and attacks on healthcare professionals and injured protesters, as well as politically-motivated mass dismissals of workers from jobs and students from university. It is this calculated campaign of arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, serious allegations of abuse in prisons, and show trials before special military courts that is at the heart of the rights crisis in Bahrain today.

Authorities block website broadcasts live events

on Twitter. Many sites are blocked because the protesters in Bahrain broadcast live events on them, especially the events of repression of the demonstrators demanding political reforms. The authorities have dismissed many of the students for expressing their political opinion on those sites.

The profound ambivalence of Arab states to the protection of human rights is clearly reflected in the aggressively hostile position of these governments towards human rights NGOs. Tactics, used by the Arab states, ranges from total prohibition of their activities, and harassment of activities, to undermining of these organizations from within. Human rights defenders in Bahrain constantly find themselves subjected to a systematic campaign of intimidation and harassment by the authorities, a recent example of which is Mr. Nabeel Rajab (President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights) for speaking out on human rights violations in Bahrain.

There have been systematic attacks on medical providers by the government. The injured in the protests are subject to mistreatment and torture at Salmaniya Hospital. Special Rapporteur on torture should take the urgent action and investigation of those accusations against the anti-riot police.

Each of these crimes has separate legal elements that need to be established. There are also legal differences between individual criminal responsibility and the responsibility of superiors, which is more difficult to establish. In particular with respect to the latter, we need to establish whether superiors in the chain of command failed to take appropriate measures to prevent torture when they knew or should have had reason to know that torture took place. There is also command responsibility, when those in the chain of command failed to investigate and prosecute those who commit such a crime. These considerations of international criminal law are not exclusive, since the Bahrain criminal code contains two provisions criminalizing torture (namely, Arts. 208 and 232).

The end of August Bahrainis witnessed the death of a child who was injured in protests. The boy was among a crowd of youths who had gathered in a peaceful protest following morning prayers in the mainly Shi'a village of Sitra, calling for the overthrow of the unelected Sunni monarchy. It seems that the Bahraini regime can kill civilians and children without a murmur from Washington or London. The

issue for many Bahrainis is not just mere knowledge, but rather direct approval by Washington and London of what is a state terror tactic against civilians.

Silence is not a new phenomenon in the international community. The Arab public wondered about Western support of Iraq during eight years of war with Iran, despite Iraq's gross and systematic violations of human rights. The international silence towards the crimes in Bahrain is changing into a kind of religious segregation and racial apartheid which is against the Charter, Declaration and the two Covenants. Perhaps, the silence is due to the Fifth Fleet of the United States Navy stationed in Bahrain's capital; or because the majority of these victims are Shi'ites; it can be in fear of Iran, or even in fear of an oil crisis. Whatever it is, there is no justification to sacrifice innocent people, let alone cooperation of some countries to commit crimes against them.

The current interventions are aimed to support an illegal non-democratic government which neither represents its people nor protects their legitimate rights and legal democratic interests. Bahrain's case is an internal affair which requires any foreign interference to be sought and authorized by the host state. Yet, this authorization requires that the Bahraini government be the legitimate representative of its people. Therefore, human rights violations have been made in this regard if we take into account Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Not even Chapter VII of the Charter will allow any such interventions. On the basis of stipulations of Chapter VII, the Council is allowed to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" and to take military and nonmilitary action to "restore international peace and security". The goal is to support the defenseless people against a government violating the basic principles of human rights, rather than to support the government or a special group within a monarchy. The government is a minority which requests the international support to help the al-Khalifa ruling family of Bahrain.

Bahrain's recent issues were no more than some civil protests at the beginning. What waged a war was a dangerous overreaction by the Saudi or UAE governments, along with their western allies, in fear of wider Mideast demands for democracy. There has



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been no foreign aggression to Bahrain; rather, the neighboring states intervention would necessitate an intervention by the Council against the occupying UAE and Saudi forces.

Even on the surface, the Saudi and UAE interventions were not in compliance with rules of international law. Ridiculously, mechanisms used to support Bahrain's monarchy are exactly the ones favorable to this government. In practice, and as mentioned above, all humanitarian limits have been exceeded by the foreign troops. From a human rights perspective, sending foreign troops or even request for any such help against the civil rights of the majority people of Bahrain, per se, are gross violations of the Universal Declaration and constitute crime. According to Article 29 of the Declaration, the government can impose specific limitations to civil rights provided that such limitations are set in line with the general welfare of the citizens in a democratic soci-

ety. The only justification provided by the allies was the security of the region. But, is that an acceptable pretext under which a country will be able to occupy its neighbors? Security of the region is a concern for all the neighboring states including Iran; if, however, Iran embarks on such an intervention by sending its troops to Bahrain, international reactions will definitely be different from what is the case now towards allies of the Bahraini government.

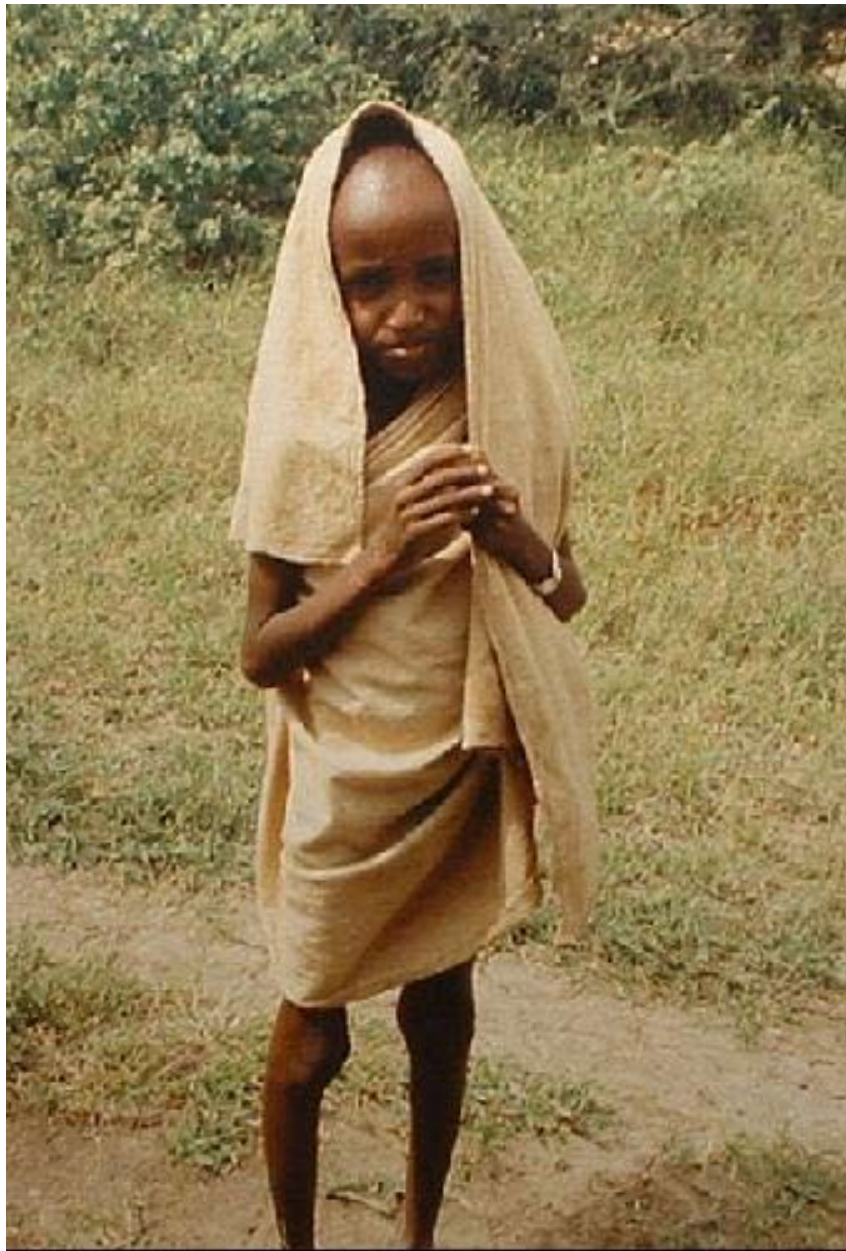
The Bahrain crisis will naturally lead to an oil crisis, which is a danger to the interests of the Western governments. UK and other arms suppliers, however, benefit from crisis in this country. Interestingly, this huge benefit was gained by simply sending the Saudi and UAE troops to Bahrain, and as their stay in Bahrain lasts longer, western countries are going to gain more benefit in this trade.

Human rights in Somalia

The legally binding force of international human rights law is perceived to be meaningless in the context of “collapsed states” like Somalia, or those undergoing civil war and severe civil strife. These and related factors have led to serious differences of opinion between international and Arab human rights movements regarding such issues as the legitimacy of “humanitarian intervention”, imposition of economic sanctions or the use of “political conditionality” in economic aid and military assistance programs in the name of promoting the protection of human rights in developing countries.

Somalia faces the most severe humanitarian crisis in the world today and the worst food security crisis in Africa since the country’s 1990/91 famine. At least 3.7 million people are in acute food and livelihood crisis - about 50 per cent of the country’s population. Some 3.2 million people are in extreme need of immediate, lifesaving assistance as a result of cumulative droughts, loss of livelihoods and insecurity. Already, the crisis has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people.

Human rights in Somalia are extremely poor and serious human rights violations are a problem due to the unstable political situation in the country. A decade without a central government has done little to improve the situation in most of the country. A broad range of new institutions and security sector reforms are needed. Justice is enforced by both police forces



and factional militia, both of which have committed many human rights abuses in the past. Kidnappings by militia groups to obtain ransom money are common. Arbitrary arrests are a problem. Prison conditions are extremely poor and dangerous. Overcrowding, dangerous health conditions, and abuse by guards exist in Somali prisons.

Thousands of civilians have been displaced. Warlords responsible for factional fighting have become members of the new government. Journalists have been arrested and human rights defenders threatened in several areas.

Due to the imposition of martial law, freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement are all restricted on a de facto basis. Many of these rights are formally guaranteed de jure by the 2004 Transitional Federal Charter, yet the government has not been in any position to guarantee them, and in cases, has specifically abridged them.

Violence and discrimination against women, including genital mutilation, is common. The rape of women by militia and bandits is also a problem. Child abuse, including child labor and human trafficking, is another problem. The United Nations has listed Somalia as a country in which the use of child soldiers exists. Many youths join armed gangs and militia groups.

US intervention in Somalia compounds dire humanitarian crisis. Back in February 2010, reports indicated that Washington was imposing “impossible” conditions on aid deliveries for Somalia and holding up tens of millions of dollars of desperately needed food based on accusations that it would be diverted to terrorists. However, according to the UN official in charge of humanitarian efforts in Somalia, the accusations of aid diversions to terrorists were “ungrounded”. Unfortunately, the “new U.S. policy on Somalia” doesn’t stop with weapons sales to a corrupt government and the withholding of aid to starving people.

The U.S. military operations in Mogadishu raise questions about U.S. military ethos and doctrine that remain unanswered. Who is to be called to account for clear breaches of the Geneva Conventions? Some individual soldiers are doubtless guilty of excesses, but it would be a shame if they were scapegoated: it was senior commanders who made the key decisions. Mogadishu also compels us to ask, is U.S. military doctrine itself compatible with fighting a determined enemy without inflicting wholly disproportionate casualties on the surrounding population?

The nature and dynamics of the post-colonial state and weakness of civil society in the Arab world, including Somalia, enables its governments to simply disregard appeals to human rights standards. However, since social forces tend to seek immediate and concrete response to their demands, they will be attracted to strategies of more direct political action, instead of long term “investment” in the rule of law and protection of human rights.

Concluding remarks

While fully appreciating the profound need for international cooperation in diminishing the negative consequences of human rights violations, we believe that sustainable protection of human rights can only be achieved by each society for itself. There is no



intention here to call for an end to, or even reduction of, international efforts to monitor and publicize violations in the region in order to “shame” Arab governments into greater compliance with human rights standards. But because international advocacy cannot be a substitute for work at the local and regional level, sufficient attention must be given to promoting local capacity. Consequently, it is simply not possible to protect human rights in a practical manner, without the consent and cooperation of the state in question. While “humanitarian intervention” can be justified in exceptional circumstances, experience shows that the international community is neither able nor willing to replace the state in maintaining the long term legal, administrative, and other means for the protection of human rights in any part of the world. In any case, it is unacceptable from a human rights point of view for other states, whether acting unilaterally



or multilaterally, to take control of a country in the name of the “good of its own people”.

The value added of human rights is to provide an independent frame of reference, and practical mechanisms, for ensuring that governments do respect and protect the human rights of their citizens. Because horrific experiences have repeatedly shown that national governments cannot be trusted to maintain the necessary degree of protection for the rights of their own citizens, human rights were taken to be a matter of international concern under the Charter of the United Nations, which provided for the protection of human rights as one of the purposes of the United Nations, under Article 1 (3). Paradoxically, however, states continue to control the processes of defining and implementing human rights through international treaties and customary practice, as well as their domestic application with-

in their own territories, as acknowledged by Article 2 (7) of the UN Charter. Consequently, the question is how to achieve the international protection of human rights without violating national sovereignty, which is itself a collective human right under the first Article of the 1966 Covenants. It is not helpful to simply call for formal limitations on state sovereignty, because that is neither practically feasible nor necessarily good for the protection of human rights in the long term. As the practical expression of the fundamental human right to self-determination, strong sovereignty is both integral to the functioning of the present international order, and essential for the protection of national populations against exploitation and abuse by foreign powers and transnational corporations.

The Arab human rights movement suffers from a variety of internal and external problems, as well as broader difficulties, parts of which have been discussed in this paper. The movement must find ways of coping with the extraordinary circumstances and crises experienced by countries like Bahrain, and Somalia, where the very existence of society itself is threatened by civil war and/or external intervention.

The protection of human rights anywhere in the world is a process, not an “objective” that can be achieved once and for all. While states have the international obligation to protect human rights on the ground, governments will not act accordingly without pressure from internal and external actors. Consequently, progress in the process of human rights protection is dependent on the ability of its advocates to constantly prompt governments into taking the necessary action, and hold them accountable for failure to do so.

Ultimately, the challenge is how to be “visionary yet realistic”, because there are no “magic solutions” that can materialize immediately for any of the obstacles and problems facing the protection of human rights in the Arab world in general and in Somalia in particular. Because one has to take the world as it is, not as one would like it to be, strategies for promoting the protection of human rights must take into account the deep-rooted nature of the problems in devising incremental solutions that address immediate short term needs, while seeking to achieve long term ends.



Review of the Situation of Today's Family in Iran and the World Conference

■ By: Hamide Aboutorabi

Introduction

As the smallest and most important institution of society, the family is very important in the Iranian society. Throughout history this institution has continually seen developments and faced many challenges which is necessary to pay attention to.

The International Day of Families brings about the opportunity to while increasing the capacity and raising the awareness of the addresses of the characteristics of a healthy family, and through holding technical roundtables and sittings, the importance of this institution at national and international levels is reflected through the media and documentations.

To this aim as a civil society institution on the occasion of the International Day of Families the ODVV held the Review of the Situation of Today's Family in Iran and the World Conference with the universal slogan: Confronting Family Poverty and Social Exclusion. The conference was held with the cooperation of UNIC in Tehran, the UNA-Iran and the Family Planning Centre. This conference was held on 16 May, 2011 with the aim of strengthening

of the family foundation. Attending the conference were religious scholars, university science faculty members and 40 family experts and activists from the governmental and nongovernmental sectors. The conference was held in the assembly hall of UNIC.

The conference started with the welcoming speech of Mr. Siavash Rahpeik the ODVV director and was followed by the reading of the UN Secretary Generals message for the day by UNIC representative Mr. Mohammad Ali Rajaee Moghadam.

Dr. Ezzatolsadat Mirkhani, religious and law expert, reviewed the basis of the strengthening of the family in Islamic legislation, Dr. Anvar Samadi-rad, member of the science group of Alame Tabatabaee University reviewed the situation of the family and its problems in today's Britain, Dr. Mehdi Saberi psychiatrist and the head of the psychological department of the Coroner's Office reviewed the causes of problems within the family institution in Iran and the world, and Ali Zarean MS in media studies and head of IRIB Channel 5's children's group reviewed the glass member of the family, family problems and the end of the age of dialogue. The conference ended with a Q&A session of the participants on the



subjects that were raised above.

Opening speech: Siavash Rahpeik

In the opening speech, Mr. Siavash Rahpeik the ODVV director said, “The subject of the family has a special status in our religion, but in some parts of the world the foundations of the family have become damaged, and to this aim we shall review these problems from the religious, historical and social aspects for the prevention of these damages. We must prevent families from damaged on the basis of the experiences and problems of other countries, because in many societies, the vulnerability of the families towards problems have taken a sharp rise. International days are good basis for solidarity and discussion and debate between different beliefs and create basis for cooperation in social and human rights debates, and the holding of scientific sittings prepare the basis for the growth and improvement of human rights.” At the end of his speech Mr. Rahpeik called upon governmental and nongovernmental organizations to work towards reaching this high goal.

Secretary General’s Message: Mohammad Ali Rajaee Moghadam

The message of the Secretary General’s for the day was read by Mr. Moghadam from UNIC in Tehran. The message goes:

“Far too many families endure chronic, punishing

hardship. Lacking jobs and the means to make ends meet, adults are unable to provide adequate nutrition for children, leaving them with lifelong physical and cognitive scars. Other family members can suffer neglect and deprivation. Poverty continues to claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of women each year in childbirth.

Social exclusion is often at the root of the problem. Discrimination and unequal access to social services deprive families of the opportunity to plan a better future for their children.

Certain types of families are at particular risk, in-



International days are good basis for solidarity and discussion and debate between different beliefs and create basis for cooperation in social and human rights debates, and the holding of scientific sittings prepare the basis for the growth and improvement of human rights.”

cluding large families, single-parent families, families where the main breadwinners are unemployed or suffer from illness or disability, families with members who suffer discrimination based on sexual orientation, and families living in urban slums or rural areas. Indigenous and migrant families, as well as those living through conflict or unrest, are also on the front lines of marginalization and deprivation. A number of governments have adopted family-focused strategies, including cash transfer programmes, child allowances, tax incentives and specific gender- and child-sensitive social protection measures. An expansion of these policies, which can improve the nutrition and educational status of children, can help end cycles of poverty that persist across generations.

On this International Day of Families, let us resolve to support families as they nurture the young, care for the old and foster strong communities built on tolerance and dignity for all.”

The causes of problems within the family institution in Iran and the world: Dr. Mehdi Saberi

The head of the psychiatric department of the Coroner’s Office spoke about the lack of life skills for healthy marital relations, the use of tranquilizers, and increase in divorce cases are some of the challenges of Iranian families and said that 60 percent of divorce cases in Iran were sexual problems cases. He believed that one of the issues that weakens the family is separation and currently divorce is on the rise in Iran, and the consensual divorce problem in our country is an increasing crisis. According to reports in most consensual divorce cases, after a period of time the couples reunite as a family. But in this process the institutionalized sanctities of the family are shattered. Consensual divorces are very commonplace and legal in most countries, but these divorces only take place after several counseling sessions.

According to this expert failure to get along and understand are the main reasons in majority of divorce applications, and this is a mental disorder which originates from anxiety, stress and anxiety. The problem, failure to get along and understand with a mental origin is never deemed as strong cases for divorce in courts. Understanding means the couples understanding problems and in this regard



experts deem, unemployment, patience, migration, forced marriages, and sexual intercourse problems as key reasons for divorce. Mental disorders, the use of narcotics, lack of education for families, economic problems, domestic violence and extramarital affairs are particularly important in relationships between couples and the family.

He said that paranoia personality disorder was seen more in our society than others, and throughout history due to attacks, many people lack trusting in character. In this regard parents attach the lack of trust of others in raising their children, which is very influential in the creation of a paranoid personality. A paranoid individual hesitates in trusting others and without enough reasons looks at people with suspicion, because he’s worried that he’ll be used and exploited or tricked, insulted, belittled by others, and they also easily give up these issues.

The basis of the strengthening of the family in Islamic legislation: Dr. Ezzatolsadat Mirkhani

Member of the Women’s Studies Group of Tarbiyat Modares University, speaking on the above said: “the Noor Surah in the Koran is the best Surah with regards to family relationships which deals with the cleanliness, strengthening and kindness in families. The termination of relations between couples is the result of the current century which is not unique to our country alone.” Referring to the theories of western philosopher Will Durant who had predicted



On this International Day of Families, let us resolve to support families as they nurture the young, care for the old and foster strong communities built on tolerance and dignity for all.”

that the family would become one of the world’s biggest challenges in the 21st Century, Mirkhani continued, “unfortunately even in religious societies the upbringing and management of family issues parameters are not observed. Islamic legislation pays attention to all stages of couples before, during and after marriage, and covers the human and logical requirements of marital relationships, and overall neither the man nor the woman have the right to rule over the family, because the only contract that the Koran has set an example is marriage.

Dr. Mirkhani continued: “If in society the justice principle is a requisite, then the principle of tolerance and kindness and to this aim heavy punishments have been foreseen in Islamic legislations for men and women who cause the breakup of families. Despite the age of communication, the religious backings in our country have not strengthened.”

The situation of the family and its problems in today’s Britain: Dr. Anvar Samadi-Rad

Dr. Anvar Samadi-Rad member of the science group of Alame Tabatabaee University said: “Currently the education institution for the development of tomorrow’s people is very impractical and some countries still do not have the right impression of Iran. If we want to have a healthy society we must raise healthy individuals, and currently the rise in the number of addicts which is the result of dysfunctional families must be carefully studied and support services must be set up by relevant organizations.”

He gave an example of working with a one of the street children and said, “there are organization that have been set up to help guardianless children, but do not have the means to put the children up for a single night, and their reason behind this is that even spending one night at the centres would bring about moral problems for the children. This is a picture of the homeless children centres and organization of our country. International Day of Families or a slogan cannot prevent problems which arise from dysfunctional families.

According to the science of psychology, children that are subjected to abuse and violence, their brains change and in this regard there is no boundaries with regards to the family in Iran or the world. The glass member of the family, family problems.

review of the influence of the media on the family institution: Ali Zarean

The end of the age of dialogue; The head of IRIB Channel 5’s children’s group said: “A child can receive 20 times more information from the media than his or her parents. This factor necessitates the review of the domestic and international media process in line with the family institution. Most of the problems of Iranian families in 20 years will be from children that are exposed to various TV networks. On this basis a comprehensive study showed that for the amendment of one year’s worth of worldwide TV programmes, 300 years are required, and it is certain that anti-violent theories must be where the media start from. Children get influenced by television through repetition. And when a child is exposed to a media, he or she is not influenced in the first stage. This is why that for the rescue of the future generation and correction of children’s behaviour, language creation in families must take place through the media.

THE FALL OF MUAMMAR GADDAFI

■ Chandra Muzaffar



At the time of writing, Muammar Gaddafi has yet to be captured or killed by the rebels. Whatever his fate, one thing is absolutely certain: the Gaddafi era is over.

What brought about the downfall of this often eccentric, sometimes ruthless, leader who ruled over Libya for almost 42 years?

Causes

Gaddafi was one of the main causes of Gaddafi's downfall. As noted in the JUST Commentary of March 2011, Gaddafi was an autocratic ruler who in the last two decades allowed wanton abuse of power, corruption and nepotism to discredit and destroy his leadership. There was hardly any latitude for freedom of expression in his highly personalised style of governance. Dissenters were imprisoned, tortured or killed.

These were some of the reasons why a sizeable segment of the citizenry turned against Gaddafi and his family. Some of the tribes and clans, respected grassroots religious figures, professionals and even members of his Cabinet and elements within the State's security apparatus started to desert him from the early days of the

uprising. A lot of young people in particular were determined to oust him.

Add to this the concerted opposition of ruling elites within the region. Gaddafi had antagonised a number of them at Arab League and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meetings. It explains why the Arab League eagerly endorsed the idea of a "No Fly Zone" over Libya which effectively crippled Gaddafi's air force. Qatar was directly involved in military operations, apart from helping to export oil controlled by the rebels and providing them with financial assistance. Like Qatar, the United Arab Emirates also helped to finance and train the rebel soldiers.

More than the opposition of Arab rulers, it was NATO's massive military involvement which brought down Gaddafi. NATO's bombing campaign--- 20,000 sorties, with more than 7,500 strikes against ground targets--- pulverised Gaddafi's military infrastructure. And, contrary to official denials, Western military personnel, in unmarked combat clothing, not only provided training to the rebels but also accompanied them in their operations. In other words, there were Western boots on the ground in disguise. In the final assault upon Tripoli, it is alleged that NATO backed officers played a pivotal role in the planning and execution. Without NATO, some analysts have rightly observed, the rebels would not have succeeded in defeating the Gaddafi forces.

The media was also a significant factor. Arabic television channels gave full backing to the rebels. Al-Jazeera was an outstanding example of a television network that went out of its way to campaign for the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime. Arabic newspapers also got into the act. Needless to say, the mainstream Western media made no attempt to conceal its bias. In this regard, it is worth noting that the impact of social media was much less in the case of Libya compared to the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

Having looked at some of the causes for the fall of Gaddafi, let us now probe these causes further to understand their real significance and deeper implications.

Deeper Implications

One, Gaddafi's regime was the epitome of the "despotic dynasty" that has come to characterise so many of the Arab states in the last five or six decades. In a despotic dynasty the ruler, often unelected, would have been in power for a long period of time, and seeks to preserve and perpetuate his power through family and relatives, in collusion with the military, and by resorting to harsh, oppressive and autocratic measures. Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were despotic dynasties of varying shades and degrees. There are other despotic dynasties--- some monarchical, some republican--- that are still standing in the Arab world. The Arab uprising has shown that the masses will not accept this form of governance any more. This is perhaps the single most significant achievement of the uprising.

The rejection of despotic dynasties has expectedly strengthened calls for honest, upright men and women in power who are accountable and answerable to the people through fair and free elections, on the one hand, and for the creation of mechanisms that will enhance popular participation in the democratic process, on the other. Equally important, there is outright anger in much of the Arab world against the lifestyles of the powerful: their ostentatious opulence and their hideous extravagance. It is related to a far more significant demand for the reduction of economic disparities and the equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities.

Two, while there was a movement for change, it would be wrong to describe it as "peaceful" or "non-violent." That the anti-Gaddafi protest resorted to arms within a few days of its eruption

in Benghazi is an indisputable fact. This raises a fundamental question about people's struggles for political change. The struggle for change has to remain peaceful and non-violent however difficult the circumstances may be. Only if it is peaceful, will it be able to minimise the danger of bloody feuds and violent factional wars after its victory.

The defenders of the violence that marred the anti-Gaddafi movement argue that faced with Gaddafi's brutal security apparatus, the movement had no choice but to fight. But other movements for change --- against the Shah of Iran in 1979; Marcos in the Philippines in 1986; East European dictatorships in 1989; and Indonesia's Suharto in 1998--- which also had to confront armies that were sometimes far more formidable than Gaddafi's, refrained by and large from using weapons. What explains their non-violent approach?

Because these movements were genuinely popular mass movements with millions and millions of people on their side--- like the movements in Iran and the Philippines--- the armies



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that confronted them did not dare to embark upon some wild shooting spree. In a sense, the Tunisian and Egyptian armies also held back their fire-power because they knew that almost the entire nation was behind the peaceful protesters. But in Libya, the protest movement did not command total overwhelming support from the populace for at least the first four months. It was propped up to some extent by external forces from within and without the region. Besides, as we have seen, there were already armed groups some linked to Al-Qaeda among the protesters in the initial phase itself who were totally committed to violence. It is in its resort to violence that the Libyan rebel movement is different from the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings.

Three, though a number of Arab rulers loath Gaddafi, their aversion to him was not the only reason why they chose to support his ouster. Since government leaders in Paris, London, Rome and Washington wanted Gaddafi out, Arab leaders were only too happy to help fulfil their agenda. Colluding with the centres of power in the West is an Arab elite trait in vogue for a long while which expressed itself in both the Kuwait War of 1991 and the Iraq War of 2003. If collusion that often leads to betrayal of the interests of the Arab people is rife, it is because many Arab rulers are dependent upon the military and political power of the West to keep themselves on their thrones.

Four, this brings to the fore NATO's blatant intervention in Libya which raises fundamental questions about its role in global politics. This is the second time that NATO is involved in a military adventure outside its geographical zone. Is this going to become a pattern in the future --- whereby NATO obtains UN Security Council mandate to employ its massive air-power to conquer some resource rich or strategically critical state in the Global South? Will the continent of Africa in particular be the target since the scramble for control over its abundant natural resources among the big powers has already begun in earnest? Are we witnessing --- in the wake of the abysmal failure of the US, Britain and its allies to establish control over Iraq and Afghanistan--- a modified approach to Western hegemony?

Instead of direct invasion and occupation

(a'la Afghanistan and Iraq), will Western states henceforth use air-power via NATO to emasculate a recalcitrant state's defence, train and arm rebels, and embark upon covert operations in order to overthrow its leadership? At the same time, one can expect these hegemonic forces to pile up pressure against the targeted regime through the UN's Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court (ICC), Western human rights NGOs and the media. Of course, they will keep telling the world that they are doing all this to prevent human rights violations and protect civilians. Indeed, the UN's "Right to Protect" is going to be evoked more and more in the



future to justify the hegemons' intervention and aerial bombardment. It is worth recalling that in the old colonial days, it was "feuding princes", "chaos and anarchy" or simply "the need to bring civilisation to backward people" that was the justification for conquest and subjugation.

The ulterior motives behind intervention will of course be concealed from the public. But the man-in-the-street knows that in the case of Libya it is its vast oil reserves that are the real reason for the West's intervention. Why should oil be the reason, one may want to ask at this juncture, when Gaddafi had opened doors to major Western oil companies in recent years? True, he had provided access but what the companies wanted is control over Libyan oil. Gaddafi would not allow this. He had after all nationalised oil in the early years of his rule. Besides, Gaddafi, as we observed in an article in the JUST Commentary

(May 2011), has been trying to galvanise African states into a sort of United States of Africa that will resist Western attempts to exploit Africa's resources. He was also opposed to the US idea of an African military command, Africom, which seeks to reinforce the US grip upon the continent.

It was because Gaddafi was, all said and done, an obstacle to larger Western economic and military designs in Libya and Africa that he had to be eliminated. In fact, right from the outset, regime change was the goal of the Western powers and their local proxies. They have achieved their goal. But it is regime change courtesy NATO



Now that Gaddafi has been defeated, what can we expect in Libya? Resistance from Gaddafi supporters may continue for some time for at least two reasons

bombs--- not a change of government through mass peaceful 'people power'.

Five, if we probed further the role of the biased Arabic and Western media in the Libyan conflict we would discover that they had transgressed basic media ethics. CNN, BBC and Al-Jazeera among other television stations portrayed Libya as a country that had lagged behind in economic and social development. None of these channels highlighted, or elaborated on, the fact that Libya recorded the highest human development index score for Africa in 2010, according to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2010. Even more disappointing, not a single prominent media outlet gave any attention to the details of the African Union (AU) mediation plan which sought to end hostilities immediately and lay the foundation for a negotiated settlement between the

Gaddafi regime and the rebels. Neither did any mainstream television or radio or newspaper accord any emphasis to the involvement of militant groups in the uprising in Benghazi or investigate how and from where they received their weapons or what the sources of their funding were. The media also deliberately downplayed the pivotal role of NATO, especially its clandestine ground operations, in ensuring the defeat of the Gaddafi regime.

What Next?

Now that Gaddafi has been defeated, what can we expect in Libya? Resistance from Gaddafi supporters may continue for some time for at least two reasons. He had distributed arms to a broad cross-section of the population a couple of months ago. Tribal attachments are still strong and there are tribes ---in Sirte for instance--- which remain loyal to Gaddafi. What this means is that there is a possibility of a prolonged civil war in Libya.

The situation is exacerbated by a National Transition Council (NTC) that comprises disparate groups ranging from longstanding human rights activists to individuals who have just left the Gaddafi leadership, to Muslim Brotherhood (IkhwanulMuslimin) functionaries, to hardened religious militants. Once the enemy is no longer a threat, will these groups be able to hold together? Or will severe in-fighting hamper and hinder the NTC's work to such an extent that it will be rendered ineffective? If it is not able to function, how will it address the humanitarian crisis caused by a shortage of food and fuel and other basic necessities of life that looms large in Tripoli and other parts of the country?

To put it another way, is Libya heading towards an Iraq-type situation--- political chaos and social turmoil? If it is, the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi would have been a pyrrhic victory.

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Malaysia.

1 September 2011.

ODVV Statements in the HRC (16th Session)

Item 3 – Trafficking in Children

Currently approximately 1.2 million children fall victim to trafficking each year, which according to statistics makes up over 30 percent of the world's human trafficking figures each year. The extent of trafficking in children resulted in the ratification of numerous conventions and protocols, but sadly despite these conventions that include the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child Additional Protocol, and the extensive campaigns of nongovernmental organizations and international community, we witness the daily increasing of this evil phenomenon in the world.

As a nongovernmental organization active in the field of human rights, the ODVV expresses its deepest concern about the daily growing of human trafficking, children in particular throughout the world, and believes that lack of good coordination between international organizations involved in this problem and countries is what is causing the wasting of resources and failure in concentrating in the fight against trafficking in children.

This organization believes that for the removal of all the problems and faults that implementing and enforceable mechanisms of international conventions, such as application of enough implementing guarantees to the Rights of the Child Additional Protocol, are some of the issues that international organizations should pursue.

Also cooperation between all nations in combating document forgers, review and amendment of laws to confront traffickers and strengthening borders between countries, and the protection and monitoring process of the Human Rights Council can all be very effective in reducing this phenomenon.

Finally we would like to remind that the appointment of a special rapporteur on trafficking in children alongside the encouragement of the UN towards particular supports for the networking of NGOs active in the fight against trafficking in children, at regional and international levels, is a very apt request from the Human Rights Council.



Item 4: human rights violations on the pretext of war on terror

Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the defined processes and procedures in the framework of “war on terror” have caused serious concerns among human rights advocates and groups. The failure to be committed international justice standards, extrajudicial detention procedures and transfer of suspects, the denial of individuals their most fundamental human rights and numerous instances of human rights violations in the war on terror are the most important concerns and challenges in this regard. The establishment of a shadow justice system in the United Kingdom which greatly restricts terror suspects of their rights is one of the gravest violation of human rights examples. These restrictions that include: house arrests, preventing contact with others and participation in public events, and conditions on the use of bank accounts, work, university education, travel and even the use of the telephone and internet, are all in extrajudicial manners.

There are numerous reports of the violation of fundamental rights, torture and mistreatment committed by US forces – both in the form of the military and private security companies – against suspects all over the world, in Iraq and Afghanistan are all worrisome. The distancing of the United States from the accepted self-defence principles in its anti-terrorism policies, America’s failure to remain committed to international law and principles regarding detention and transfer of individuals and putting them in secret detention centres, the labelling of “illegal combatants”, and thus stripping them of the Geneva Conventions protections, the use of inhuman techniques for getting confessions and their prosecution in military commissions are some of the gravest cases of human rights violations committed by the United States. Unfortunately since the United States is constantly undermining international law values in its military policies, despite promises given by the government, Guantanamo and Bagram detention centres are still in full operation, and are seen as living facets of the abuse of terror suspects.

The ODVV hopes that the views and doctrine that allows the officials of a government that allow themselves to arrest, imprison and torture an individual solely for being suspected of taking part in or intending to take part in terror attacks, and not letting any institution know of the whereabouts of the suspect, and under the cover of national security threat, deeming themselves not answerable to any institution, will be removed from the west’s practices and memories. We are certain that, that day will be a good day for world peace and tranquillity.



Item 6: Racial discrimination

In the US Unfortunately fully enjoyment of the treaty rights is affected by factors such as race, nationality, ethnicity, indigenous status, income and gender. The US Justice system and law has within itself deep shortfalls and intentional discrimination which makes it not able to fully observe the ICERD.

Extensive inequalities in racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities having access to housing, employment, education, healthcare and the criminal justice system, not only blots the human rights aspect of the biggest claimer of being human rights supporters in the world, but also has had a domination effect in the increase in cases of violation of minorities right with the US justice system.

According to statistics, the percentage of African American inmates inside US prison in comparison the whole nation's African American population is higher than the white population. And the rape and sexual abuse rates among Native American women is higher, but these crimes are dealt with less than white population related crimes.

Also according to statistics, the police brutality increases against racial and ethnic minorities, and furthermore all evidence indicates that the American justice system uses racial and economic discrimination when issuing death sentences.

The United States government has not accepted the right to development as a right of mankind, and by not ratifying the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in practice

the United States has released itself from having to provide a vast are of rights for its citizens. The negative consequences of this factor, particularly when comparing racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities enjoying decent work compared to other US citizens become very clear.

We hope that the United States of America UPR is an opportunity for the genuine improvement of the human rights situation of the country and put an end to a long lingering pain that racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities of the country, and they start to enjoy their basic rights.



Item 9: Racism, racial prejudice, xenophobia – Islamophobia

Over the recent years we have several times witnessed the blatant violation of human rights in the United States of America and European countries, and it is unfortunate that no attention is made towards this problem. Among these violations, the targeting of Islam and Islamophobia in the form of attacking Muslims and their properties has been very extensive. Western government claim that citizens are free to practice their religion and the governments' duty is to provide civil liberties and create multicultural societies. But when these freedoms are to be provided for others, western governments create numerous obstacles and they demand for the integration of other cultures within the western culture. Defamation of holies is something that has stirred up a lot of noise these days, and on the pretext of freedom of belief and expression, obstacles are created for Muslims in particular.

Perhaps it can be said that these forms of disrespects are actions that are taken by a number of extremists and not too much attention should be made towards them, but if we take a look at the history of defamation of Islam and its holies, the significance of behaviours such as the latest Koran burnings will become evident, and it is necessary for the international community to adopt more serious measures in confronting this. The publication of cartoons of the prophet of Islam, and the encouragement of their drawers by some western politicians and statesmen, the making of anti-Islam movies, adoption of discriminatory laws, repeated threats to burn Islam's holy books, associating Islam with terrorism, and the use of all media capacities to portray Islamic and western cultures being head to head, are all aspects that show Islamophobia being turned into intentional policies in some countries.

Towards cultural diversity and education of peaceful coexistence to people in a society, the ODVV believes that regional workshops and seminars must be held as part of dialogue, coexistence and reciprocal understanding of religions from each other, and the conclusions and findings of these workshops be discussed and debated at international levels with NGOs with similar objectives. We believe that gradually a culture of reconciliation among nations instead of a culture of violence and hatred towards a religion and xenophobia be taught from primary school levels so that in adulthood this culture is institutionalised and xenophobia and hatred of religions is eliminated. We believe that there can be no peace among nations without peace among religions.



(17th Session)

Item 3: Terrorism

Terrorism strikes and targets innocent people by using violence for inter alia, political objectives. So far the main emphasis of the international conventions as well as concerted international and national efforts have been directed to prevent or punish terrorists and terror groups. This has often invoked the disregard of the victims of terror.

Where is an international body, parallel to the Security Council which is exclusive for certain veto powers, that will entertain the complaints and human sufferings of the victims, fairly and impartially, irrespective of their nationalities, political views and ideological backgrounds? Universal jurisdiction for prosecution, yes, but where is universal redressing the grievances?

Is it possible for the victims of terrorism to trigger the universal jurisdiction against the terrorists groups and their state sponsors, whom not only under the guise of human rights and refugee laws, have kept them immune but introduced them as defenders of human rights?



Putting an end to terrorism as the most serious crimes of that are a concern for the international community as a whole and by being witness to the unimaginable atrocities committed by certain organizations, would not be achieved unless there is real determination to tackle the plight of the Iranian victims, free from double standards.

It is incumbent upon us in particular to see the feasibility of establishing a voluntary fund for such victims as well as to explore the ways and means to rehabilitate them into their own society, the compensation and relief for victims regardless of their nationalities, justice could not have been done discriminately.

The considerable procedural and political obstacles should be removed. The Iranian victims of terrorism have been marginalized, even excluded from international venues and their fundamental rights to be heard by this Body be denied and violated, which demonstrates that there is no real will to end their lasting physical and mental pain. This is a flagrant violation of their human rights.

Item m 3: Women's trafficking and violence against women

As a nongovernmental organization, we believe that despite all the improvements made with regards to the vulnerable groups of societies, such as women, nevertheless several areas in this regard require further action and efforts. Right now in most parts of the world, even Europe, further measures are needed for the protection of women's rights. We understand and commend the efforts that have been made on important issues such as violence against women; efforts that include legislation, establishment of shelter and counselling centres for women rape victims, research initiatives and European countries' efforts for raising public awareness of this issue. But we also believe that the present and high statistics of the extent of violence against women and girls, low criminal prosecution figures, the high figures of refraining from reporting crimes and also not enough funds for organizations that provide support services to the victims are all very alarming.

Also the spreading of violence against women in vulnerable and marginalised groups that include women tourist, migrants, refugees and the disabled in Europe are further cases which we call for enough studies to be conducted by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

Sadly as mentioned in the reports of the Human Rights Council reporting mechanisms, recommendation and conclusions of European countries' UPR and also ECOSOC committee reports, alongside the problem of violence, there is the trafficking in women and girls which is one of human rights violation of this gender. The lack of information and the extent of this problem, the shortfalls of laws in this regard, and the lack of a comprehensive strategy to fight trafficking results in not only any action not be taken in the fight with this problem, but also not enough multilateral understanding will be possible. As an organized crime trafficking in humans is the third biggest global business after drugs and weapons trafficking. It is fast growing in different countries. And according to United Nations published figures the trafficking trade brings 7 to 10 billion dollars profit, and unfortunately most of the destination countries are American and European countries.

Expressing concern towards these high figures and:

1 – with understanding that human trafficking is a grave human rights violation and a serious challenge in the face of humanitarian activities;

2 – with a stress on the fact that all countries are accountable for actions taken in the fight against human trafficking;

3 – with a stress on the role and effects of globalisation in the increase in the human trafficking problem, women and children in particular;

4 – pointing to the challenges that exist in the lack of unified and fair laws in confrontation with the subject across the world;

5 – considering that most prostitution and force labour victims fall prey to human traffickers;

6 – considering that most trafficking victims are women and children who are trafficked from developing to developed countries;

7 – with a stress on the conditions of vulnerable groups such as women who are continuously threatened by poverty and social outcasts, rural, old, migrant, heads of household, and disabled women attention to the obstacles in the way of individuals involved in education, employment, health care and other social services;

8 – pointing to prevention policies and programmes, rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims back to society and their families and their full access to their rights must increase;

We at the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence call upon the cooperation of all countries for the eradication of human trafficking in source, transit and destination countries, and the monitoring and facilitating role of the Human Rights Council and other mechanisms for the protection of women's rights, such as the newly established UN Women.



Item 4: Violation of Human Rights in Different Parts of the World

The ODVV states that although human rights violations have become very normal in most parts of the world, but ignoring accepted human rights standards, particularly in countries that claim to be human rights advocates and have high standards, must be brought to attention and dealt with.

On this basis we believe that although the European Union issues statements in condemnation of human rights violations in other parts of the world, but in practice it does not have a comprehensive and practical solution to change its own terrible human rights conditions. We alongside many other global civil society members believe that the EU's credibility and reputation in human rights, solely depends on paying attention to the human rights violations of its member states. The human rights violation records of the EU include discrimination against migrants, Muslims, the Roma and other groups, improper access to shelter for refugees, human rights violation cases in the war on terror. The EU must make

further political commitment towards its own human rights conditions and its international comments.

The human rights conditions in Canada are a cause for concern for us. The refusal of Canadian officials in the accountability for the treatment of detainees in Afghanistan, change of views with regards to the subject of human rights violations of Palestinians, and also Ottawa's failure in filling the income gap between Canadians and the Natives of the country are some of the criticisms made on the human rights conditions of the country.

The violation of economic, social and cultural rights of the citizens – vulnerable communities in particular – of



the United States of America is alarming. We believe the US government's approaches and policies in this regard will have significant negative consequences in areas such as health and medicine, children drinking their mothers' milk, fair and reasonable wages, and career advancement opportunities.

With regards to civil and political rights, while expressing our grave concern towards America's improper approach towards Guantanamo, and prevention of the inmates from filing their complaints in Federal courts and also delaying the closure of the facilities, the UN special rapporteur on torture's criticism of the holding of Bradley Manning accused of leaking secret information to Wikileaks and America not allowing the special rapporteur to visit him, all indicate that the United States only observes human rights when it is in the interest of its national interest.

In Saudi Arabia the attitude towards human rights, has taken a more security shape, particularly security forces' treatment of those complaining the lack of basic rights

is a cause for concern.

Several humanitarian law violations of people living on the borders of Yemen and Saudi Arabia have been reported by international organizations. Saudi military intervention in the recent Yemeni unrest, regardless of the pretext cannot be a green light for the killing of the defenceless people of the country.

The same thing has also recently happened to Bahrain and the presence of Saudi security forces in the country and their participation in the crackdown on the protestors, is not only the violation of human rights, but it is also the violation of the humanitarian rights of the people of Bahrain and also violation of their national sovereignty. This is something that unfortunately international organizations have been silent on and refrain from adopting measures in condemning these acts.

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) wishes to express its deep concern over the way the protestors are treated and their citizen's rights not observed, particularly the death of two Shia Bahraini citizens following their arrest, which was probably due to torture. Ad-

Addressing the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner for Human Rights recent criticism of the situation confirms this going concern. She called arbitrary detentions, killing of the protestors, assaulting and battering the protestors and medical personnel and attacking hospitals very concerning and unlawful and called for an immediate end to these acts. Also the joint statement of a group of UN Special Rapporteurs and experts on 22 March that included Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial executions, torture, human rights defenders, and the arbitrary detention working group, Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and

belief, all show that the Human Rights Council's silence towards the treatment of the Bahraini protestors is not justifiable.

While criticising the way Saudi and Bahraini officials have approached the civil unrest of these countries, the ODVV strongly criticises the existing double standards of the big powers – the United States in particular – towards the wave of awareness of the region and Arab countries, calls upon international organizations, particularly the Human Rights Council and the global civil society, in view of the double standards approach with regards to Libya and Bahrain, to try to document the stated violations cases, and prevent the continuation of the crackdowns and the silence of the west.

The ODVV hopes that the processing of human rights violation cases in the Human Rights Council to be managed and organized in such way that not only countries that claim to human rights, but all members of the international community understand that in the monitoring of human rights situations of countries, there are no double standards and selective treatments.



Item 7: Human Rights Situation in Occupied Palestinian Territories

The violation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has been going on for 6 decades and unfortunately neither the United Nations nor its Member States have managed to fairly deal with the blatant violation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinians. Below are some of the instances of these violations over the recent months to show the concern of international civil institutions and society over the lack of multilateral and resolute condemnation of the occupiers of these lands:

1 – Israel's continued attacks on the residents of Gaza, is one of the grossest violations of the rights of the people of the occupied territories. With 16 deaths and 36 injured, March of 2011 was one of the bloodiest months in Gaza since then end of the Operation Cast Lead. Several international organizations have expressed concern over this that include the human affairs bureau of the Organization of Islamic Conference, whose special report on the human conditions in the Gaza Strip stresses that these attacks will have serious material consequences for the residents, because as well as targeting Gaza's international airport, farms, factories and properties of the residents of the region have been targeted by Israel.



2 – On 10 March 2011, the UN Special Rapporteur in the Occupied Territories called upon Israel to put an end to illegal demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank. In his speech correctly stressed that the eviction of Palestinians from their homes, the demolition of homes, expansion of Jewish settlements and aggressive repossession of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem were all blatant violations of fundamental human rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence states that from the beginning of this current year and according to nongovernmental sources from inside occupied territories, to-date Israel has demolished 96 Palestinian owned buildings in the West Bank 32 of which were residential buildings.

3 – Despite the calls by the international community to completely halt the construction of settlements in the occupied territories and East Jerusalem, Israel has sadly been ignorant. We believe

that these practices are in conflict with international humanitarian laws and an obstacle for the restarting of the peace process and reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting agreement for the Palestinians, something that the world public opinion insists on.

4 – According to published reports by NGOs based in occupied territories, Palestinian prisoners suffer from terrible conditions. According to evidence they are only allowed visits with lawyers or their families when they make confessions. This type of interrogation of detainees is contradictory to international laws. According to these documents to get confessions the IDF commit various acts of torture such as tying prisoners to chairs for prolonged periods, denying them access to hygiene facilities, sleep deprivation, threats to hurt family members and degradation. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence believes that attention to these cases, which are not few in number, shows the depth of the conditions and numerous cases of human rights violations of the occupied territories. In this regard, the refusal of Israeli officials in being accountable towards the war crimes in the 22 day war, and their efforts to ridicule and dismiss the findings of the Gaza Conflict Fact Finding report – the Goldstone Report – for solely to further complicate the situation and also the increased mistrust of human rights advocates in the current procedures in international human rights monitoring, which we hope the Human Rights Council will halt this trend with wisdom.

Item 9: Xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia

A vast part of world's communities have deep and rooted problems with the way they approach foreigners, religious and ethnic minorities, and how they approach the holies of religions. In view of the acceptability of the levels of some of these insults and hope to improve them, especially through raising societies' awareness and transparency of attitudes and distorted beliefs, nonetheless we witness more powerful and rooted forms of racism and Islamophobia in Europe, in spite of all the human right claims of this continent, something that is very sad.

Reviewing the events that have taken place in Europe over the last few months, the Organization for Defending Victims of violence has noticed a large volume of human rights violation cases, particularly intentional or unintentional incitement of the mass media to these issues and escalation and provision of racist and Islamophobic views.

As stressed by Human Rights Watch, in Italy ethnic and racial hatred crimes are very rarely prosecuted in Italy. In fact it seems as though Italian officials try to make this issue insignificant; an approach that in practice has resulted in the spread of these types of crimes. Furthermore, the tone of the officials of the country, government policies and the media have given negative clichés against migrants, Muslims and the Roma and escalated these injustices.

In Germany, the approach of the government to Muslims issues has resulted in the number of attacks against mosques and Islamic centres in Berlin to rise sharply to an extent where the city has become the main focal point of Islamophobia in the country.

Over the last few months several Islamic centres have been attacked by groups who wanted to set these places on fire, and although the police is investigating these very slowly, but we believe that these acts that have been committed in a series have roots in racial and religious convergence in Germany. Explosion of a bomb outside the Iranian Cultural Centre in Berlin and a total of 5 attacks against mosques last summer are examples of these acts.

One of the most significant Islamophobic and also escalation of defamation of religion that took place eight months ago by a preacher in the United States who had announced his intention on burning the holy book of 1.6 billion people and only backed off when the US government pressed him to refrain from doing so. With a reference to the consequences of these unwise behaviours on Muslim societies, such as the death of a number of Afghans during anti-Koran burning protests, while condemning these Islamophobic



treatments that are committed under the cover of freedom of belief and expression, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence resolutely calls upon the United States government to adopt measures to not only prevent these types of actions not to take place, but also the “defamation of religion mentality, Ibrahamic religions in particular” not to have the space to grow in the American society, a society which is religious.

We believe the US government’s performance against these sorts of treatments have not only not been preventive, but it can even be said that they have been inciting. Biased news coverage on Muslims, efforts to link

Islam to terrorism, which unfortunately are repeated not only in the media, but also the official statements of the government, and other instances are all issues which escalate this sick phenomenon, cause Islamophobic views to appear in the American society.

Unfortunately it seems that not only in America, but also in Europe over the recent months such measures and vocabulary by western politicians have become in a way a method to win votes in elections, and by exploiting the sentiments of the people in their constituencies, to promote anger and hatred towards Islam and Muslims.

While condemning these sorts of measures that serve no purpose other than fuelling the fire of religious hatred, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence calls upon

the Human Rights Council to by paying importance more than before on issues such as the promotion of interfaith dialogue and transparency and clarification of wrong assumptions of monotheist religions, to the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression, and freedom of religion and belief a joint mandate to find practical and sustainable solutions to overcome this problem. We hop with the acceptance and start of this initiative an fitting atmosphere away from prejudices comes about, so that the followers of monotheist religions can live alongside each other amicably through peaceful coexistence and mutual respect to each others holies.



ODVV Statements

Statement on the Bomb Attacks in Iraq

The month of Ramadan is a Holy month for more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the world. It is a month of families becoming closer, fasting, praying, and it is the month of the feast of Allah. And yet again the Muslim world has witnessed the senselessness and sheer brutality of terrorism committed by Muslims against fellow Muslims. In a series of explosions on Monday 15th August, at least 67 people were killed and 170 injured in various

immediate halt.

The ODVV calls upon the international community, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference to come together as united members of humanity, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and language and find a comprehensive solution to the dreadful events of the region.

ODVV condemns the killing of PhD student of Khajeh Nasir University

In a statement the ODVV condemned the assassination of Khajeh Nasir University PhD student, and called for swift investigation of this brutal act by relevant criminal investigation authorities, and the punishment of the perpetrators.

According to the ODVV public relations, this is the fourth such attack over the last eighteen months that has taken place in Tehran, where innocent citizens, especially the scientific and academic community of the country.

The ODVV believes that the university and intellectual community of each country is the human and social investment, and the creator of the development of that country. The question that is pertinent is: is the targeting of these types of victims (from the intellectual and academic community of the country) indicative of the intentions and careful planning of these killers to deal a blow to the development process of the country? Are these attacks not in contrast to the right to development which is one of the fundamental human rights?

In an environment where the Human Rights Council issues resolutions on the human rights situation in Iran and appoints a special rapporteur for the country, and while the international community and human rights organizations across the world scream war on terror, the people of Iran continue to be victims of terrorism. How come despite the continuation of these brutal acts of terror none of the international organizations do anything effective? Is it a just process where due to political approaches towards a country where its intellectuals and scientific faculty are assassinated? Isn't this in



locations in Iraq. The question we should be asking is not who are behind these inhuman attacks, but why? What drives people to the point where they disrespect their own faith and kill fellow brothers and sisters?

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence condemns in the strongest terms these terror attacks and reminds terrorists that in no time in history have any terror groups managed to achieve their objectives. The answer to discontent and dissatisfaction is not violence!

The ODVV also condemns the continuation of the violence and killings in certain parts of the region which continue on unabated despite loud and audible calls by the international community for an

violation of fundamental and natural human principles?

As an active Iranian civil society member in special consultative status to ECOSOC, with peace, justice and human rights slogan the ODVV while condemning in the strongest terms this inhuman act which was carried out in front of the wife and child of the victim, which is indicative of the extremeness of the violence of terrorists, expresses its deepest sympathies and condolences to the victims family, and calls upon the international community and relevant authorities to while condemning this act of terror, to bring the perpetrators to swift justice!

The ODVV deems Iran with having 16,000 victims, the biggest victim of terrorism and believes that the fight against terrorism must be top priority for human rights organizations and institutions.

statement on the Norwegian Terror Attacks

The news of the horrific Oslo bombing which took at least 7 lives and the gun attack on the island of Utoeya which took at least 84 other lives with countless wounded from both attacks, deeply shocked, saddened and outraged the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence. Once again the

brutal, illogical and indiscriminate true face of terrorism has been witnessed in a part of the world.

We at the ODVV extend our condolences to the families of all the victims and our sympathies to all the survivors and their families; and we wish them all Godspeed in these very difficult moments.

While extending our condolences towards the Norwegian government, we urge this government to fully and extensively investigate this tragedy in a neutral and professional manner, by setting up a fact-finding committee, and we urge the government to adopt measures to prevent similar heinous acts occurring again, while fully observing the rights of all Norwegian citizens.

condemning the violence in Bahrain

In a statement the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence condemned the killing of innocent people of Bahrain and stressed on the necessi-

ty for the intervention of the international community to prevent the continuation of the violence in this country and the realisation of the rights of its citizens. According to the ODVV public relations the statement goes on to say: This organization deems the recent events in Bahrain as an example of the violation of citizen's rights and the right to self determination of the people of the country, and condemns the government's crackdown of its citizens. In another part of the statement it says: As a nongovernmental organization active in the field of human rights and in consultative status to ECOSOC, the ODVV calls upon the government of Bahrain and international and Islamic organizations to pay attention to the demands of the people



of Bahrain in completing the political process of the country and the rights of the people to be respected amicably in expressing their views. Without a doubt the continuation of the violence and disregarding of the demands of the citizens by the government and also the interference of regional countries in the internal affairs of Bahrain can have dire consequences for the oppressed people of the country. At the end the statement stresses on the role and obligation of international organizations and: calls upon international human rights organizations and the Islamic Conference Organization to quickly intervene and put an end to the continuation of these inhuman acts.

Reflection of Important Human Rights Developments in the Recent Months

By: Elham Shooshtarizadeh



New authorities outline priorities for UN support to post-conflict Libya

The new Libyan authorities have requested United Nations support for several post-conflict tasks, including elections, transitional justice and national reconciliation, according to a senior UN official who is in Tripoli to begin laying the groundwork for the world body's operations.

"We've already been given some very clear priorities by the leaders of the National Transitional Council (NTC)," Ian Martin, the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General for Post-Conflict Planning for Libya, told reporters in the capital.

These include support for the electoral process, as well as advice and assistance regarding transitional justice and how to strike a balance between accountability within the law for the most serious human rights violations while also seeking national reconciliation.

Mr. Martin was dispatched to the North African nation last week by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to discuss the kinds of support the new authorities want from the UN in the weeks

and months ahead.

At a meeting of world leaders in Paris on Thursday, Mr. Ban stressed that it will be essential to work closely with the Libyan leadership to identify their needs and priorities. "Once those needs are identified, we will have to act in harmony and in a coordinated manner to ensure effective, collective action," he stated.

After arriving in Tripoli, Mr. Martin first met with senior NTC representative Ali Tarhuni, who outlined the body's priorities for urgent action and asserted that "we want the UN to be partner in this process."

The Special Advisor also discussed key challenges in public security with the Interior Minister and other interlocutors such as getting the police back on the streets and weapons off the streets and building a democratically accountable police force.

This is "not an easy matter in any society let alone one that is just coming out of 42 years of oppressive security and [six months of] armed conflict," Mr. Martin stated.

As part of his five-day visit, which began on Saturday, the Special Advisor held discussions with various groups in

Tripoli, including lawyers, judges, youth, women and human rights activists, and briefed representatives of the international community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the nature of his visit.

He also visited, at the invitation of the authorities, two police stations and the Al-Jedaida prison, where he spoke to both Libyan and non-Libyan prisoners, including sub-Saharan Africans detained during the fall of Tripoli.

Mr. Martin stressed the urgent need for the basis of detention to be reviewed by public prosecutors, and to inform the prisoners' families of their whereabouts. The relevant NTC officials confirmed their commitment to justice and the rule of law and said that any mistakes would be rapidly rectified, adding that everyone would be treated fairly and equally.

The Special Advisor will travel to Benghazi tomorrow to meet NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil and Ahmed Al-Jehani, Minister of Reconstruction and Stabilization.

Libya has been in turmoil since February when opposition forces rose up against the regime of Colonel Muammar

Reflection of Important Human Rights

al-Qadhafi as part of a wider pro-democracy movement across North Africa and the Middle East.

UN News Centre



Former Yugoslav army chief convicted by UN tribunal for war crimes

The United Nations tribunal set up to prosecute the most serious offences committed during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s today convicted Momčilo Perišić for crimes against humanity and war crimes and sentenced the former chief of staff of the Yugoslav Army to 27 years in prison.

Mr. Perišić was found guilty by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) of aiding and abetting murders, inhumane acts, persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, and attacks on civilians in Sarajevo and Srebrenica. At the same time, he was acquitted of charges of aiding and abetting extermination as a crime against humanity in Srebrenica, where more than 7,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were summarily executed in

July 1995, and of command responsibility in relation to crimes in Sarajevo and Srebrenica. In the judgment – the first handed down by the tribunal in a case against an official of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – Mr. Perišić was also found guilty of failing to punish his subordinates for their crimes of murder, attacks on civilians and injuring and wounding civilians during the rocket attacks on Zagreb in May 1995.

The tribunal's trial chamber found that Mr. Perišić, among other actions, oversaw the Yugoslav Army's provision of extensive assistance to the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Army of Serbian Krajina (SVK) in Croatia, including infantry and artillery ammunition, fuel, spare parts, training and technical assistance. Such assistance "became more centralized, structured and coordinated during General Perišić's tenure," the presiding judge, Bakone Justice Moloto, said as he read the judgment.

The tribunal, which is based in The Hague, heard from more than 100 witnesses during Mr. Perišić's trial, which began in October 2008 and concluded in March this year.

Since its establishment, the tri-

bunal has indicted 161 persons for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001. Proceedings have been concluded against 126 accused and are currently ongoing for 35 others.

UN News Centre



Burma sets up human rights commission

Burma has set up a national human rights commission which it says will safeguard the rights of its citizens.

The panel would comprise 15 retired bureaucrats and academics, said the state-run New Light of Myanmar paper.

It gave no details about the panel's scope or responsibilities.

The move follows steps by the newly-installed civilian administration to improve Burma's international reputation as well as relations with the country's Democracy movement.

Analysts, however, question whether the retired civil servants and scholars on the panel will have the will or the ability to challenge the government.

The United Nations special

Developments in the Recent Months

rappporteur for human rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, called for the establishment of an independent commission during his visit to the country last month.

It was the first time in more than a year that he had been allowed to visit, and he was given rare access to Insein jail near Rangoon, where some of the country's estimated 2,000 political prisoners are held.

On his departure, Mr. Quintana reiterated his call for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry into suspected crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma. The US and Britain are among 16 countries that have backed the proposal.

Charm offensive

Pressure for an inquiry is expected to build at the UN General Assembly this month.

The Burmese government is extremely anxious to avoid such an inquiry, correspondents say, as it would document alleged atrocities committed over many years - particularly against Democracy activists and ethnic rebels fighting for independence in border regions.

The civilian government of President Thein Sein has been working hard to show a new face to the world and to im-

prove relations with its critics at home and abroad. It took over from the military government in March after elections last November that were widely condemned as a sham.

While some in the opposition see the new government as merely a front for the military, it has raised hopes for change with a major charm offensive in recent weeks.

Exiles have been urged to return home and the Democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi was invited to the capital, Naypyidaw, for a meeting with President Thein Sein in August.

The former military authorities did appoint a human rights commission of their own a decade ago.

Government opponents said it did nothing to protect them from repression.

But some are beginning to entertain hopes that the new administration could be making a genuine attempt to dissociate itself from the worst abuses of the past.

BBC



Council of Europe digs for truth on CIA prisons

The Council of Europe has

adopted a draft resolution condemning European countries that allowed the CIA to operate secret prisons on their soil. The resolution urges prosecutors to "persevere in seeking to establish the truth."

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which deals with legal affairs and human rights, gathered in Paris on September 7, 2011, to discuss the report by Swiss politician Dick Marty (Switzerland, ALDE), who says the US has been widely using torture in European detention centers. Moreover, some European states have been resorting to state secrecy to cover up their activities.

Marty criticized the lack of investigative efforts in the countries involved in the scandal, especially Romania, which has denied the episodes. Poland and Lithuania, which are accused of special activity to deport terrorist suspects, seemed to Marty to be delaying or hindering the investigations.

All this appeared on the draft resolution adopted by PACE, which has passed a verdict to launch judicial or parliamentary inquiries into secret service activities. Western intelligence is accused of various human rights violations such as torture, abduction or rendition.

Reflection of Important Human Rights

The committee also urged prosecutors in Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Spain to double their investigative efforts and called on authorities in the US to cooperate with them. Meanwhile The human rights commissioner for the Council of Europe urged countries that have hosted secret CIA prisons to come clean, and said Poland, Romania and Lithuania were among at least seven countries that hosted “black sites” for “enhanced interrogation” during the “war on terror.”

“Darkness still enshrouds those who authorized and ran the black sites on European territories,” he said. “The full truth must now be established and guarantees given that such forms of co-operation will never be repeated.”

CIA officials have acknowledged the rendition program, but refused to discuss details and denied violating any laws. Efforts to challenge the agency and get details about it in U.S. courts have been turned aside. Hammarberg’s statement comes as documents seized from Moammar Gadhafi’s compound in Libya shed light on the program of extraordinary rendition, or questioning of terror suspects in third-party countries where U.S. law does not apply.



General Assembly opens new session with plea for unity to tackle global crises

The General Assembly on Tuesday, 13 September opened its annual session with a fervent plea for cooperation in tackling looming crises from conflicts to climate change, and a nostalgic look back to a former secretary-general who died 50 years ago in the service of peace.

“Moving forward the myriad of issues before us will require hard work, integrity, and partnership,” the Assembly’s President for its 66th session, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, told the meeting, which was dedicated to the memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, who died in a plane crash in 1961 while trying to bring peace to the nascent country now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“The sands are shifting. We have before us a unique opportunity to shape change and ensure that our next chapter will be safer for the most vulnerable, more prosperous for those in need, and kinder to Planet Earth.”

He outlined four main areas of focus for this year’s ses-

sion. The first is the peaceful settlement of disputes, a need that has become more relevant and urgent than ever. “It is my view that the General Assembly should, through its revitalization, become more engaged and empowered on issues of mediation, so that it can fulfil its role as the world’s preeminent peacemaker at this major juncture in international relations,” he said.

Turning to UN reform, Mr. Al-Nasser called for revitalizing the Assembly’s work so that it remains efficient, effective and representative, especially in responding early to emerging crises, and for reforming the Security Council.

The Council, whose resolutions alone are legally binding while the Assembly’s are recommendations, has not changed in decades, with five permanent members with veto powers – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – and 10 non-permanent members without veto elected for two-year terms. Formal talks to reform it have been under way for more than 18 years.

“There is no shame in recognizing that after six decades our organization needs reform,” Mr. Al-Nasser said.

Developments in the Recent Months

On the third priority, improving disaster prevention and response, he cited the unprecedented surge of natural and man-made disasters. “Populations across the world are experiencing increased vulnerability, food insecurity, and health and education crises,” he said. To address these critical issues, we must enhance cooperation among various actors.”

In the last area, sustainable development and global prosperity, he stressed the primacy of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight ambitious targets set in 2000 that aim to slash hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, a host of diseases and lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015.

“With the target date for the achieving the MDGs on the horizon, and as we face global economic turmoil, improving global governance and finding innovative financing modalities will continue to be on our agenda,” he said, citing the challenges of climate change and the urgency of solving the global financial crisis. “No one can fix this issue alone and the UN should be the central forum to discuss this issue.”

In a separate speech Mr. Al-Nasser praised Mr. Hammar-

skjöld as a pioneer of preventive diplomacy, the effort to resolve crises before they become deadly and intractable. “Mr. Hammarskjöld was formative in shaping the UN’s methods of operation,” he said.

“Mr. Hammarskjöld was the driving force behind the establishment of the first United Nations Emergency Force, dedicated to securing and supervising the cessation of hostilities in the Suez Canal — an approach that is now a core function of our activities — today called ‘peacekeeping’.”

Praising his predecessor, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the 193 Member States: “Nothing could be more fitting at this tumultuous time than to reflect on the life and death of Dag Hammarskjöld... we are inspired by the power of his conviction and we pledge to carry on the work of the United Nations that he died defending.”

He noted that one Mr. Hammarskjöld’s deepest convictions was that the UN exists not for the major powers but for the other, smaller, weaker countries, especially at that time the newly independent nations of Africa.

“His words ring as true today. This reason for the UN’s

existence was tested recently in Libya and in Côte d’Ivoire,” Mr. Ban said, referring to two West African countries where the UN more recently helped to promote democracy after civil wars. “In those cases and others, we stood firmly on the side of democracy, on the side of justice, on the side of the people.”

Next week the Assembly holds its annual General Debate, when world leaders gather to discuss key global issues.

Mr. Al-Nasser told a later news conference that his main theme would be mediation. “This is a very timely issue,” he said. “The world is going through difficult times. Diplomacy is needed today. It is very important.

UN News Centre



Inaugural Ceremony



Inaugural Ceremony of Tehran Peace Museum

29 June 2011 - Tehran

After almost three years of hard work, the new building of Tehran Peace Museum is now open to visitors.

The inaugural ceremony for Tehran Peace Museum was held on 29 June 2011 on the anniversary of the gas attack against the Iranian Kurdish town of Sardasht by Saddam Hussein's regime in 1987. This day is commemorated in Iran every year as the national day of campaigning against chemical weapons.

International guests including Mr. Maeda, Director of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, citizen representatives of Hiroshima, and Iraqi survivors of gas attacks against the Iraqi Kurdish town of Halabja were among the participants in the inaugural ceremony.

Many Iranian civil society representatives, peace activists, war veterans, survivors of chemical weapons attacks, artists, authors, and school children were also invited to the event which was held in the conference hall of Tehran City Park (Park-e-Shahr) where Tehran Peace Museum is located.

of Tehran Peace Museum



After short speeches by Mr Ayazi the Vice Mayor of Tehran, Koichiro Maeda Director of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Shizuko Tsuya President a Hiroshima NGO association from Hiroshima, the message of Tehran Peace Museum was read by one of the Iranian survivors of chemical weapons attacks. Then all participants marched towards the Peace Museum in the northern side of the City Park to witness the planting of an olive tree by special guests while at the same time forty doves were released to mark the birth of yet another centre for fostering peace. Finally Tehran Peace Museum was formally inaugurated by the Vice Mayor of Tehran and Director of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum followed by a tour of the Museum accompanied by all the guests.

The project for establishing Tehran Peace Museum was initiated in 2007 by the member of an Iranian NGO (Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support) and with the support of Tehran Municipality. Tehran Peace Museum had been conducting its activities since 2007 and during the refurbishment of its main building in a temporary office in the City Park.

DDVV

Activities

Acquiring Consultative Status from ECOSOC Education Workshkop



This education workshop was held in two courses in September 2010 with the aim of increasing the international credibility and increasing dialogue opportunities at the international level for NGOs, with the participation of 50 NGOs representatives.

In a scientific and practical way the participants were introduced to the ECOSOC NGOs Committee and its duties, NGOs Liaison Office, NGOs Communications Network, concept and method of acquiring consultative status, necessary conditions to be eligible for consultative status, and different types of consultative status. The workshop finished with a Q&A session and the participants received certificates of attendance.

» Participating in the 16th Session of the Human Rights Council

The 16th Session of the Human Rights Council ran from 28 February till 25 March 2011 in Geneva Switzerland. As in previous sessions the subjects of the agenda were in the form of 10 items. The first week of the Session was the High Level Segment. In the second week the Forced Disappearances, Arbitrary Detention working groups, the Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons, the right to food, adequate housing, the sale of children and prostitution, human rights defenders, freedom of belief and expression, and the special representative on children in armed conflicts submitted their reports to the Council. The holding the annual meetings on the rights of the child and hostage taking in acts of terror was another activity of the Council in this week.

Also within Item 6 of the Agenda, the human rights situation of Liberia, Malawi, Mongolia, Panama, Maldives, Andorra, Bulgaria, the United States of America, Marshal Islands, Croatia, Jamaica, Micronesia, Mauritania and Lebanon were reviewed.

Written and Oral Statements

The ODVV submitted 7 oral and 9 written statements (8 joint statements with Iranian NGOs and 1 joint statement with 117 international NGOs) on terrorism, trafficking in children, trafficking in women, racial discrimination and Islamophobia, human rights violations in the United States, and human rights violations in the west. All of these statements are registered and in the Human Rights Council website archives.

Also the reading of 5 oral statements indicates the highlighted presence of the ODVV in the 16th Session of the Council.

Sidelines sittings

In the sidelines of the main Session the ODVV held 2 sitting as follows:

Islamophobia and Human Rights: This first pan-



el was held on 13 March in which approximately 90 people participated. The sitting which was chaired by Dr. Alireza Deihim, had guest speaker Dr. Amir Saeed, lecturer from Sunderland University who spoke about the media and its role in the promotion of Islamophobia, Dr. Mohammad Javad Javid lecturer from Tehran University who spoke about Islamophobia and the right to morality in the west and Dr. Stephan Sheehi from University of South Carolina who spoke on the subject of American Islamophobia as a cultural ideology.

Human Rights Violations on the Pretext of War on Terror: This sitting was held in the morning of 15 March in Room 27 of the Council. The sitting was chaired by Dr. Deihim again and the guest speakers included Dr. Mohammad Bagher Mir Abbasi lecturer from Tehran University who reviewed the legislative function of the United States in the war on terror, Dr. Amir Saeed from Sunderland University who reviewed the effects of terrorism on the criminal justice system, and Mr. Piro Diawara from Interfaith International reviewed violation of human rights in the private lives of citizens while fighting against terrorism.

Participating in the 17th Session of the Human Rights Council

The 17th Session of the Human Rights Council commenced from 20 May in Geneva, Switzerland.

In the opening meeting of the Session which ended on 17 June, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pella in her opening speech said that the ongoing popular movements in the Middle East and North Africa were great and historic. She reassured that this period was a period of the new era of freedom and hope for the people, especially the young generation.

Throughout the Session, special rapporteurs on extrajudicial executions, human rights and transnational corporations, independence of judges and lawyers, migrants rights, right to education, cultural rights, human rights and foreign debt, poverty, right to health, human trafficking, freedom of expression, and violence against women, all presented reports and debated the contents of their reports with the Council member States.

The ODVV followed a new approach in the method of interaction and communication with special rapporteurs and experts and held four special meetings with special rapporteurs on human rights defenders, arbitrary and extrajudicial executions, promotion and protection of human rights, and independent



expert on human rights and poverty, and the ODVV stressed on furthering interaction with UN special rapporteurs.

Also, while presenting a large volume of its publications such as books, newsletter, annual report, multimedia CDs, the ODVV read one oral statement on terrorism and submitted three written statements. After the start of the 17th Session, the ODVV also submitted four written statements to the secretariat of the Council on violence against women and trafficking in women, xenophobia, violation of human rights in Palestinian territories, human rights violations in Canada, Afghanistan, and etc.

Strengthening of the Family Institution and Prevention of Violence Project



This project started on 11 June in the Afghan Refugee camp in Semnan. This project was implemented by the ODVV with the cooperation of UNHCR in Iran and BAFIA with the aim of strengthening of the family institution among Afghan national, through 4 planned stages.

The first stage of the project was the location evaluation and analysis of conditions which was done through a series of group discussions with 25 male and 42 female representatives of the refugee camp with Monireh Arezoumandi as the facilitator.

Four key questions were raised for the assessment of the situation in the camp which were as follows:

- 1 – Does child abuse take place among Afghan families living in the camp?
- 2 – What types of abuses are more common in the camp?
- 3 – What consequences does child abuse

have on the family and community?

- 4 – What must be done to reduce child abuse?

These questions received different replies from the men and women; and the next stages of the project shall be planned according the replies. In these sessions also for the second stage of the project individuals were selected to be trained as supervisors.

The third stage of the project includes the training of hundred trainers which shall be done through the introduction of the trainers to the basic concepts of violence against women and child abuse, the necessity to prevent violence, the roots and consequences of violence, and fundamental rights and life skills.

The final stage is the transfer of the what's been learned by the trainers to the camp local community which has been foreseen till the end of 2011.

ODVV Rehabilitation Centre(Raha)

CBT principles and generalities education course

This course was held from April 2011 for a group of psychologists and psychotherapists. This course included theory and practical work which included the showing of a video clip and presentation of a case study over 60 hours. Various aspects of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy were discussed in this course. The Participants were introduced to the generalities (pathology theory, concepts), assessment, formulization and model building, behavioural techniques and application of cognitive behaviour techniques in mental disorders.

OCD Therapy Education Course

With the aim of increasing the scientific and operational knowledge of mental health experts, the ODVV Rehabilitation Centre held this course in May in 30 hours for a group of psychologists. The rise in the OCD cases referring to counseling centres and the significant role of this disorder in communication and family problems were the necessities for the holding of this course. All the various technical aspects of this disorder were taught in this course, while presenting theories.

Family Therapy for Children & Juveniles with Externalizing Disorders

With the aim of increasing the scientific and operational knowledge of mental health experts, the ODVV Rehabilitation Centre held this course in June in 30 hours for a group of psychologists and counselors. The importance and particular role of childhood in the development and prevention of disorders and behavioural-psychological problems in this stage was the necessity for the holding of this education course. The principles of working with parents, the management of the resistance of parents, the structure of parents' education sessions, and parents group sessions. Evaluation tools (interviews, observations and tests), recording behaviour types, commendation, positive attention, reward and points, chart behaviour technique, setting example technique and dismissing where some of the other training concepts that were in this course.

Emotion based Couple Therapy



With the aim of increasing the scientific and operational knowledge of mental health experts, the ODVV Rehabilitation Centre held this course in July in 30 hours for a group of psychologists and counselors. The increase in the number of domestic problems cases that referred to therapy and counseling centres was the necessity for the holding of this education workshop. While presenting models for the evaluation of families, the family function process model, carrying out duties and problem solving, roles, communication, emotional interference, conflicting practice, habits, and role playing were among the subjects that were taught in this workshop.



Fair Peace Lasting Peace

Seminar on
International Day of Peace

21 September 2011



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Organization for Defending
Victims of Violence