

## **OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission concludes its 10th Regular Session held in Jeddah from 27 November – 01 December 2016**

**Jeddah 01 December 2016:** The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) held its 10<sup>th</sup> Regular Session in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) from 27 November -01 December 2016. Beside Commission Members, the Session was attended by H.E. Dr. Yousef A. Al Othaimeen Secretary General of the OIC, H.E. Dr. Abdul Salam Al Abadi Secretary of International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) and relevant international human rights experts from UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF and Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Representatives of OIC Member and Observer States, their National Human Rights Institutions and media also attended and actively participated in the open proceedings of the Session.

The traditional thematic debate of the Session was held on 29 November 2016 on the subject of '*Protecting and Promoting Rights of Children during situations of Armed Conflict, Foreign Occupation, Emergencies and Disasters*'. An outcome document on the subject was adopted by the Commission at the end of the Session.

In his opening remarks, IPHRC Chairperson, Ambassador Abdul Wahab, while congratulating Dr. Al-Othaimeen on his appointment as the Secretary General of the OIC, lauded his efforts in expediting the conclusion of the IPHRC Headquarters Agreement with the host government and thanked the Government of the KSA for the steadfast and generous support in establishment of the Headquarters.

Referring to the subject of thematic debate, the Chairperson emphasized that protection and promotion of children's rights must be accorded highest priority through an integrated rights based multi-sectoral approach to break the vicious cycle of human and nature related precipitating factors. According to him, achieving all the targets of SDGs and OIC Plan of Action 2025, especially those related to ending poverty and child labor; addressing gender inequality and harmful practices; and promoting health and education, access to justice and creation of accountable and inclusive institutions will help reduce the risk of violence in children's lives and provide effective remedies for victims.

Dr. Al Othaimeen, Secretary General of OIC, in his statement, reaffirmed that protection and promotion of child rights remains a key priority for the OIC, which is reflected in the revised OIC Charter, its 2<sup>nd</sup> Ten Year Program of Action and adoption of OIC Covenant on Rights of Child as well as holding of four Ministerial Conferences on Childhood. He further highlighted that OIC has initiated a Strategic Health Programme of Action 2014-2023 to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates and promote the health and wellbeing of the child. The results of this renewed focus are reflected in reducing child mortality rates by 50%. Also, in the aftermath of the

2004 tsunami, OIC established the OIC Alliance in coordination with the Islamic humanitarian organizations and Member States to provide humanitarian assistance to the children victims of tsunami. A similar project is being designed in collaboration with IDB for children in conflict areas of Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Central African Republic (CAR).

The Commission Members, OIC General Secretariat, panelists and representatives of Member States had an exhaustive and fruitful discussion that underlined the vulnerability of children in crises and risks they confront in volatile situations and accordingly defined general framework for humanitarian actions. While making valid observations on the context of on-going international, regional and OIC's initiatives related to protection of child rights, the discussion reviewed the prevailing best practices and identified gaps within the existing initiatives and mechanisms to suggest way the forward. The outcome document of the debate reflects the summary of key points and recommendations made in the meeting.

During the five days session, the Commission had in depth discussion on all items on its agenda including human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in OIC Member States as well as specific mandates given to it by the Council of Foreign Ministers such as Islamophobia and incitement to hatred; Standing Mechanism for monitoring human rights situation in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK), human rights situation of Muslim minorities in Myanmar and CAR. The Commission also received briefings and inputs from OIC General Secretariat and experts on these subjects, which were instrumental in making informed and comprehensive decisions and recommendations on these subjects.

While condemning the deteriorating human rights situation and extrajudicial killings in Palestine, including innocent children, at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces, and establishment and expansion of illegal settlements, the Commission urged the Member States and the international community to call for an immediate action by the UN Security Council to intervene for cessation of hostilities against Palestinians and counter the Israeli attempt to change the demographic composition of wider city of Al-Quds. Further the Commission endorsed the proposal that Member States should consider imposing strict ban on import of products from Israeli settlements, reinforcing Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions regime. A detailed press release on the subject is issued separately. The Commission also discussed and adopted the report of its visit to Palestine, earlier this year, which provides firsthand information on the sufferings of Palestinians and Israeli violations of human rights including specific recommendations. It will be presented to the next meeting of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

In its deliberations on the situation of Rohingya Muslims, the Commission noted with deep concern the deterioration in the human rights situation of the Rohingya civilians, who were reportedly subjected to torture, rape and extrajudicial killings besides burning of their houses and mosques by government security forces in northern Rakhine State. The Commission called upon the Government of Myanmar to positively respond to its request for a fact-finding visit as well as expressed its readiness to reach out to Rohingya Muslims through other possible means such as meeting refugees in neighboring States to report on their human rights situation. Also, it was agreed that the OIC and IPHRC would continue their attempts to engage with the Myanmar government through formal and informal means, which include public advocacy, humanitarian support and engagement with the civil society to secure basic human rights for the Rohingyas. Member States were also urged to continue their engagement with the new Myanmar government to persuade them to open an OIC humanitarian office in the Rakhine State and to allow disbursement of humanitarian aid even through second parties.

The Commission acknowledged that Islamophobia continues to present one of the grave challenges to the Ummah. The major indicators are the rise of far-right groups across the world and spread of this phenomenon to nontraditional regions such as Asia and Africa. It was noted that the rise of incidents of discrimination against Muslims and distortion of Islam is often due to the ignorance and lack of understanding of Islam. The Commission stressed the need to provide necessary material and human resources to the OIC Islamophobia Observatory to monitor Islamophobic acts, publications and utterances on a daily basis with a view to removing misperceptions by issuing rejoinders and calling on the authorities concerned to take appropriate remedial measures. IPHRC also expressed willingness to jointly work with the OIC's Dialogue and Outreach Department to develop a counter narrative to comprehensively combat the phenomenon of Islamophobia in coordination and cooperation with the Member States, the international community and the UN Human Rights mechanisms. Recalling its recent report on the subject, adopted by the 43<sup>rd</sup> CFM, IPHRC decided to continue to work on this subject by writing reports and holding events to raise awareness about this contemporary form of racism and human rights violation.

The “*Standing Mechanism for monitoring the human rights situation in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK)*” condemned the ongoing grave violations of human rights including the indiscriminate use of force and pellet guns that have blinded hundreds of innocent Kashmiris, extrajudicial killings of over hundred innocent people and damaged physical assets of thousands of civilians. The Commission urged the Indian Government to respect the human rights of Kashmiri people and to positively respond to its proposal to undertake a fact finding mission to IoK.

IPHRC Working Group (WG) on Right to Development (RtD) carried out a follow up review of its Abu Dhabi Declaration on RtD and proposed concrete elements for full

and effective implementation of the RtD by the OIC Member States and other stakeholders. It inter-alia proposes to develop consensus and collective action to transform the UN Declaration on RtD into a binding instrument and to seek implementation of the General Comment No.3 of the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, which obligates State Parties to international cooperation for development for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights for all at all levels.

IPHRC WG on Women and Child Rights, while welcoming the decisions taken for women empowerment during the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on Women's rights, held in Istanbul, urged the Member States to institutionalize and implement the OPAAW through concrete actions in their national policies at the earliest. It also called upon Member States, which have not yet done so, to expedite the process of the ratification of the Statute of the Organization of Women's Development so that the statute may enter into force, and the Organization becomes operational.

As part of its efforts to present Islamic perspective and counter misperceptions on contemporary human rights issues, the Commission decided to undertake thematic studies on the subjects of: (i) *“Islamophobia and Counter terrorism”*; (ii) *“Human Rights and Cultural Diversity”*; and (iii) *“Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity”*. These studies will be presented to the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers for consideration of Member States.

In his concluding remarks, IPHRC Chairperson, expressed profound gratitude to all Member States including the Government of KSA, which hosts the Commission's Headquarters, and the Secretary General of the OIC for their steadfast logistical and moral support in smooth and effective running of the Commission.

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