

**OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) concludes its 7<sup>th</sup>  
Regular Session in Jeddah held from 19 – 23 April 2015**

**Jeddah, 23 April 2015:** The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) held its 7<sup>th</sup> Session in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 19-23 April 2015. Representatives of OIC Member and Observer States, Secretary General and other senior officials of the OIC, Islamic Fiqh Academy as well as Media representatives attended the Session.

In her opening remarks, the newly elected Chairperson of IPHRC, Ambassador Ilham Ibrahim, gave an overview of the activities carried out by the Commission in 2014 as well as dwelt on the progress made by IPHRC on various mandates given to it by the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). To that end she expressed thanks for the positive response received from Member States on the IPHRC's Workshop on "Negative impact of economic and financial sanctions on the enjoyment of human rights by the people of affected countries" held in Tehran last year as well as holding of the thematic debate on "Combating extremism and intolerance in Islam" during the 6<sup>th</sup> IPHRC Session. Outcome documents of both these events contained important recommendations for different stakeholders and were widely appreciated as useful inputs for consideration of OIC Member States.

On behalf of the Commission, IPHRC Chair condemned the latest inhuman killing of over 100 students in Jerrisa University, Kenya by supposedly Al-shahab militants as well as hundreds of innocent civilians at the hands of Daash/ISIL in various countries of Middle East and Africa. Expressing solidarity with the victims of these terrorist acts, the Commission reiterated that such extremist ideologies, radicalism, intolerance and terrorism have nothing to do with Islam, which is a religion of peace and promotes moderation and balance in its teachings.

The Commission expressed strong concern on the plight of migrants from Africa to Europe, in particular recent reports of their drowning in thousands before they arrived European shores. It called upon relevant UN and European authorities to take all possible measures to address the subject in a comprehensive manner including the need to afford all possible assistance in accordance with the established international human rights norms and standards. The Commission further expressed its concern on the continued plight of the abducted girls by Boko Haram and urged relevant authorities to take all possible actions to locate and liberate the kidnapped girls, on priority.

Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary General of the OIC, also addressed the meeting and conveyed his appreciation on the useful activities carried out by the IPHRC in line with the aims and objectives of the Commission. Mr. Madani stressed the importance of the independence of the Commission's work, including intellectual independence in discussions and decision-making, and expressed the full moral, logistical and financial support of the General Secretariat for the IPHRC's work. Referring to the thematic focus of the session, the Secretary General stated that the topic of "Protection of Family

Values” was of utmost importance to the OIC, which must be protected and promoted in accordance with the Islamic values and teachings that were also in line with the universal human rights standards. He recommended holding a special conference of the OIC on the subject that could look into definition as well as measures needed to address various challenges by this fundamental unit of society and its members in different contexts and situations. He welcomed participation of Fiqh Academy in the debate and urged to build bridges of communications between the two institutions with a view to incorporating Islamic perspective on the interrelated subjects and projecting unified views and positions. Welcoming the progress made on a number of important subjects, he underscored the need for IPHRC to work on establishing a yardstick on Islamic human rights against which Member States could measure their relevant policies and progress. Mr. Madani emphasized that the advisory status of IPHRC not only entitled it to advise OIC Member States on human rights issues, but also empowers the Commission to defend Islamic values and present a true image of this peaceful religion.

During the five day session, the Commission had in-depth discussions on all items on its agenda including human rights violations in Occupied Palestinian Territories; civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in OIC Member States; specific mandates given to it by the CFM as well as procedural issues relating to its working methods and establishment of a mechanism for interaction with NGOs and broader civil society. The Commission also interacted with the representative of the OIC Special Envoy on Jammu and Kashmir dispute on the human rights situation in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK) and decided that its Standing Mechanism on monitoring the human rights violations in IoK will closely collaborate with the OIC General Secretariat on the subject. The Commission also called upon Myanmar authorities to ensure protection of the right to life and wellbeing of its Rohingya population; bring to justice those responsible for inciting hatred and violence as well as take steps to ensure non-discrimination on any grounds in laws and practice including denial of citizenship to Rohingya Muslims.

In line with the practice of addressing issues of contemporary concern to Member States, the 7<sup>th</sup> IPHRC Session held the thematic debate on “Protection of Family Values” that not only reiterated the importance of Family as the natural and fundamental unit of society, which is entitled to protection from society and State but also addressed various challenges faced both by the institution of family as well as its members in different contexts. OIC Member and Observer States expressed keen interest in the topic and stressed the importance of collective action to protect, preserve and promote these values, which are considered as crucial in developing progressive, peaceful and tolerant societies that are at peace within and without. The meeting reaffirmed the fundamental definition of the family as a long-term consensual relationship between a man and a woman who are bound by the reciprocal rights and responsibilities enshrined in Islamic teachings. It also condemned the growing trend of confusing the definition of family with new and controversial notions of LGBT families based on sexual orientation that were neither universal nor recognized by international human rights standards. A separate communiqué was issued on the subject that summarizes the discussion and views of IPHRC on the subject.

The Commission expressed grave concern and strongly condemned the continuing illegitimate Israeli practice of detaining Palestinian citizens without due process, ongoing and expanding settlement activities, continued blockade of Gaza strip, holding Palestinian Authority from collecting revenues, restrictions on freedom of movement of Palestinians as well as excavation and confiscation of land and property in surrounding of Al-Aqsa mosque, which were all illegal activities under international law and violations of the responsibilities of Israel as occupying power. It urged Palestine to file cases against Israeli violations of their human rights in relevant international courts to seek justice. It also urged the international community to play its due role in making requisite efforts to pave the way for the long awaited just and peaceful settlement of this dispute that would allow Palestinian to have their own independent, viable and contiguous State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Commission also recommended the OIC to hold regular events at relevant international forums to raise awareness about the plight of Palestinians and closely coordinate with UN Human Rights Council in bringing to fore the ongoing Israeli human rights violations. IPHRC also expressed its strong interest in visiting Palestine to observe the human rights situation on ground.

The Commission unequivocally condemned the recent spate of hateful speech against Muslims and denigration of Islamic religious symbols and personalities under the garb of freedom of expression. It renewed the call for combating denigration and negative religious stereotyping as well as proscribing advocacy to religious hatred that leads to incitement to discrimination and imminent violence. To that end, it welcomed the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of Istanbul Process (3-4 June 2015 in Jeddah) and urged all stakeholders to focus on the ways to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Action Plan contained in Res 16/18.

The Commission also delved in detail on the issues of right to development and human rights of women and children. It welcomed the fact that the Outcome Document of its Seminar on Negative impact of sanctions has been well received by the OIC Member States and urged them to closely follow its recommendations in particular the one on establishing a monitoring mechanism within OIC Secretariat to assess the human rights impact of such sanctions. It also identified “science and technology” as one of the important areas of collaboration among OIC Member States, within the ambit of right to development and decided to dwell in detail for specific recommendations on the subject in due course.

In the area of human rights of women and children, Commission delved in detail on issues related to gender equality, violence against women and children. It welcomed the decision of the Government of Malaysia to host a conference on the subject of implementation of OIC Plan of Action on Advancement of Women in 2015 and urged Member States to take all steps necessary to realize the recommendations made in the Outcome document of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting of OIC on Role of Women in Advancement of OIC States, held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2014. It was decided that the Commission would prepare studies on specific areas of rights of women and girls including the right of inheritance in Islam. It also called upon Member States to ratify the statute of OIC Women Development Organization enabling it to start its meaningful

work.

In her concluding remarks, IPHRC Chairperson thanked Member States for their keen interest in the work of the Commission as well as sustained support for its activities. She reaffirmed Commission's strong commitment to its aims and objectives as well as expressed its resolve to fulfilling various responsibilities entrusted by Member States in the area of promoting human rights. Amb Ilham also expressed gratitude to the OIC Secretary General for his personal interest in the work of the Commission as well as for providing strong support for the smooth functioning of the Commission. Additionally, the Chairperson shared with Member States the future plans and projects that the Commission intends to deliberate upon, such as strengthening research and writing reports / position papers on the right of inheritance in Islam; rights of minorities in Islam; Combating extremism; promoting/upholding human rights while combating terrorism; importance of cultural and religious diversity while promoting human rights; freedom of expression and hate speech; issue of sexual orientation as well as the need to reviewing the existing OIC human rights instruments.

With regard to the CFM mandate relating to the Muslims of Central African Republic, the Commission's delegation is proceeding to Banjul and will hold in-depth exchange of views with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights for joint action on this issue as well as other matters of mutual importance.

The Commission decided to address the theme of "Freedom of expression and hate speech" during its 8<sup>th</sup> Session. IPHRC further decided that its 2015 Annual Workshop will be dedicated to the subject of Human Rights Education and thanked the Government of Indonesia for its offer to host this workshop in Jakarta, later this year.

The Commission expressed its sincere thanks and appreciation to the host country, the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Custodian of Two Holy Mosques for their continued support and commitments to the aims, objectives and activities of IPHRC.

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