



## Concluding Summary Report of the 21<sup>st</sup> Regular Session of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission held from 21-25 May 2023

**Jeddah 25 May 2023:** The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held its 21<sup>st</sup> Regular Session in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) from 21-25 May 2023. The traditional thematic debate of the Session was held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2022 on the subject of '*Business and Human Rights: Normative Framework and Implementation Guidelines for OIC Countries*'. H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha OIC Secretary General, H.E. Prof. Koutoub Moustapha, Secretary General of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy and Ambassador Muhammad Lawal Suleiman OIC-IPHRC Chairperson jointly inaugurated the Session, which was followed by panel discussions on the thematic debate. Besides Commission Members, open proceedings of the Session were attended by OIC Member and Observer States, their National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), as well as experts from OIC General Secretariat (GS) and relevant international organizations.

At the outset, the Commission welcomed the appointment of Prof. Noura Zaid Alrshoud as the Executive Director of the OIC-IPHRC Secretariat based on her extensive and multifaceted legal and academic experience. The Commission assured her full support in fulfilment of her mandated responsibilities.

The OIC-IPHRC Chairperson highlighted that the establishment of IPHRC is a proud achievement and a milestone in the five-decade-long history of the OIC. It has brought a paradigm shift in how the OIC endeavors to carry out universal human rights and fundamental freedoms together with Islamic values, as enshrined in the '*Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights*', which is a monumental achievement as it is compatible with universal human rights instruments and in line with the Islamic ethos and values. Also, the Commission is presently facilitating the OIC General Secretariat in finalization of the revised OIC Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Referring to the Session's thematic debate, IPHRC Chairperson underlined that the business practices of many companies, especially those operating in developing parts of the world, remain unaccountable. Some of these companies wreak havoc on the environment of these nations. In some cases, they even fuel conflict and deal with armed groups to cause large-scale migrations and irreparable losses to ecosystems. These all constitute grave human rights violations but remain hidden in the illusive global supply chains.

The OIC Secretary General, in his address, appreciated the valuable contribution of the IPHRC in promoting and protecting all human rights in accordance with international human rights law with full independence, impartiality, and objectivity. While commenting on the thematic debate, he urged the Member States to make full use of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which present a practical framework to abide by human rights norms and principles business practices, including labor rights, protection of the environment and fighting corruption.

The Commission Members, panelists, and Member States representatives and NHRIs also actively participated and shared their views on the thematic debate. Based on the comprehensive discussion, the Commission adopted an outcome document of thematic debate, issued separately.



On this occasion, the Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco to collaborate and share expertise in human rights. The Commission earlier signed MoUs of technical collaboration with the national institutions from Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Malaysia.

The Commission held a workshop on the **“Right to Education for Women: Challenges and Way Forward: Case of Afghanistan”** on Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The Workshop enabled the participants to interact with various experts and stakeholders on the right to education, exchange views, identify challenges, share best practices, and recommend practical solutions to improve access to education for women and children, particularly in Afghanistan.

During the five-day session, the Commission also had an in-depth discussion on all items on its agenda, including continued Israeli human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT); civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in the OIC Member States as well as specific mandates given to it by OIC-CFM such as Islamophobia; Rights of Women and Children; Right to Development (RtD), including the existing obstacles and challenges to its full realization, such as Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM); Standing Mechanism for monitoring human rights situation in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), as well as the human rights situation of Muslim minorities in Myanmar and the Central African Republic (CAR). The Commission also received briefings from relevant departments of the OIC-GS for making informed decisions and recommendations on these subjects.

During the Working Group (WG) proceedings **on Palestine**, the Commission condemned the ongoing serious human rights violations by the Israeli occupation forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The Commission urged OIC Member States to expand their efforts at the UN to hold Israel accountable for its human rights violations based on international law. The Commission reiterated its full support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It also condemned all human rights violations at Al Quds Asharif, including the brutal assault on peaceful Palestinian worshippers inside Al Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli occupation forces. While regretting the failure of the international community to address the ever-increasing human rights violations committed by Israel, the Occupying Power, against the Palestinians, the Commission called upon all relevant stakeholders, in particular the OIC Member States, to urge the international community to continue to pressurize the Israeli government to (a) bring an immediate cessation of hostilities by the Israeli government; (b) bring an end to settlement policy and commit to respect the right to self-determination as provided in OIC and UN Resolutions; (c) release all Palestinian prisoners who are arbitrarily detained without due process of law, particularly the older and infirm as well as women and children; (d) allow freedom of movement and bring an end to the crippling embargo of the Gaza and West Bank;

The Commission also reiterated the need to maintain a unified position among the OIC Member States during voting on UN resolutions relating to the Palestinian question. Also, the Commission resolved to strengthen cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur about Human Rights in the OPT and UN Special Procedures to raise awareness. It also urged the international human rights community to support the international investigation, including by the International Court of Justice, and by International Criminal Court, of the war crimes committed by the Israeli government to bring an end to the impunity and hold the Israeli occupation forces accountable for their long-standing violations against innocent Palestinians



at all relevant international forums. A detailed press statement on the human rights situation in OPT was also issued.

The Commission received detailed briefings from the coordinator of the ***‘Standing Mechanism to monitor human rights situation in IOJK’*** and the Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary General for Jammu and Kashmir efforts and initiatives in highlighting the human rights situation in IOJK and providing political and diplomatic support to Kashmiri Muslims in the realization of their right to self-determination in accordance with the OIC and UN Security Council Resolutions. The Special Envoy, while appreciating the work done by the IPHRC in writing fact-finding reports on the situation of human rights in IOJK, informed that the General Secretariat should approach the Indian Government to allow the fact-finding visit to the IOJK to fulfil the CFM mandates. During the discussion, the Commission condemned the Indian Government’s post-August 2019 policies, which include a) persistent denial of the right to self-determination; b) freedom of religion to the Kashmiri Muslims; c) implementation of illegal ‘delimitation’ of electoral constituencies; d) arbitrary detention and torture of civilians including human rights defenders under draconian laws; e) amendments in landowning and domicile laws in IOJK as a flagrant violation of numerous OIC and UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and international human rights and humanitarian laws. Further, the Commission urged the UN and international human rights community to pressure the Indian Government to allow access to UN, OIC-IPHRC, and other human rights organizations to visit IOJK to assess and report on the human rights situation objectively and independently. It supported the call for establishing an international fact-finding mission or Commission of Inquiry for IOJK under UN auspices to independently ascertain and report on the human rights situation on the ground. The Commission reiterated its oft-repeated call to the UN and the international community to play their due role in pressuring India to: a) abide by the relevant UNSC and OIC resolutions to refrain from any administrative and legislative actions, which tantamount to altering the geographic and demographic status of the IOJK; b) restore all fundamental freedoms of Kashmiris, release all political prisoners and repeal all discriminatory laws; (c) allow access to UN, OIC - IPHRC and other human rights organizations to visit IOJK with a view to assessing and reporting the human rights situation; and d) allow people of Kashmir to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination through a free and fair plebiscite, as provided in the relevant UNSC and OIC resolutions.

The Working Group received a briefing from the OIC General Secretariat about the trend of **Islamophobia** worldwide, which continues to increase across Europe, especially (France, Sweden, and Denmark), North America, and Asia. An interactive dialogue was held with Mr. Fernand de Varennes, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Coordinator of the OIC Ambassadorial Group in New York and Permanent Observer of the OIC to UN in New York with a focus on how to enhance joint efforts to protect Rights of Muslim minorities and combat Islamophobia worldwide. The Commission also called upon the International Community to prevent any kind of discrimination, hostilities, violence and defamation, and vilification of religions, inter-alia by taking necessary legal and administrative measures. The Commission also called upon all to stand firmly against those behind the propagation and dissemination of hate speech and any other form or manifestation of religious-based defamation and discrimination. The Commission highlighted that the recent trend of Islamophobic manifestations reflects that it has moved from being a right-wing rhetoric to concrete discriminatory steps in many governmental policies and, as such, requires integrated action by all concerned stakeholders to protect the human rights of Muslim minorities. The Commission, while strongly condemning Islamophobic acts, noted that the causes of Islamophobia are not limited to the misinformation about Islam but also based on extremist political ideologies which use fear as a tool to gain popularity among the populations in many countries. The OIC Member States and



all stakeholders concerned in the Muslim World are urged to intensify their efforts to produce a civilizational form of Islamic discourse to remove the misunderstandings and misleading perceptions about Islam. The Commission shall continue to collaborate with UN and international entities to prevent negative stereotyping of religions, as well as corresponding incitement to hatred, discrimination, and violence based on one's religion. To this end, it was agreed that: (a) OIC-IPHRC shall participate in the relevant meetings of the Istanbul process: (b) hold Symposium/Dialogue on tolerance and peaceful coexistence among religions in coordination with the General Secretariat, and other institutions specialized in interreligious and intercultural dialogue, such as: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

The Commission continued to dwell on the human rights and humanitarian situation of Rohingya Muslims during the proceedings of its Regular Sessions, including its Working Group on **'Human Rights Situation of Muslim Minorities and Communities in the Non-Member States**. An interactive dialogue was held with Mr. Thomas Andrews, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Coordinator of the OIC Ambassadorial Group in New York, and Permanent Observer of the OIC to UN in New York with a focus on how to address the human rights violations that are committed against Rohingya Muslim minority and mitigate humanitarian challenges confronted by the Rohingya refugees. The Commission called for raising awareness about the importance of interacting with Member States on the way forward to enhance humanitarian intervention and address the root causes of the issue. Also, urged the international community to address the root causes of the crisis and press Myanmar to ensure the safety and security of Rohingya Muslims, recognize their basic rights, and create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of all Rohingya refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. The Commission reiterated its full support to OIC Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations against Rohingyas and expressed its willingness to expand its active role in the proceedings of the upcoming meetings. It was also highlighted that the Commission shall explore the possibility of conducting a follow-up fact finding mission to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. Also, there is an urgent need for the OIC and the IPHRC to continue raising awareness among its Member States and maintaining intensive international pressure on the Myanmar authorities to block the persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority. In this regard, it is recommended that side events with OIC General Secretariat may be organized during the upcoming Sessions of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Commission also reviewed the worsening human rights situation in the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, where the Muslim minority continues to face serious human rights violations. It noted that the political and security dynamics in CAR had witnessed minor positive progress, even though the lives of ordinary Central Africans have not improved meaningfully, and the violence has not stopped completely. The clashes between armed groups, national defense, and internal security forces frequently intensify. The Commission, taking note of the reports of the humanitarian crisis, urged the Islamic Development Bank, Islamic Solidarity Fund, and other multilateral agencies to establish a humanitarian corridor and provide lifesaving relief to the population. The Commission also decided to work closely with the OIC-GS to prepare for a second fact-finding visit to CAR to carry out an evaluation of the human rights situation.

While discussing the situation of **Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang**, China, the Commission, while recognizing the importance of OIC constructive engagement with China on the issue of Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim minorities in the country, reiterated that the Muslim community in Xinjiang has the right to protect and preserve their religious and cultural identity without prejudice to maintain social cohesion and harmony. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right, the practice of which should not be



construed as a source of radicalization. The Commission, by taking note of the findings and evaluations in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region published in August 2022, urged the OIC General Secretariat to continue to monitor the situation and engage with the People's Republic of China at all levels, for the preservation of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Commission also expressed its condemnation of the increasing acts of violence against Muslims in **India and Sri Lanka**, which resulted in the killing of innocent people and the burning and vandalism of mosques and Muslim properties across the country. Besides, the Commission also expressed its concerns over the denial of citizenship to Muslims in Asam State and urged all OIC Member States to raise these issues, bilaterally with India and in all international fora, over the treatment of Muslims and the escalation of hate speech and Islamophobia. It also urged the Indian authorities to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of Muslims in India and protect their rights as well as religious and cultural identity, dignity, and places of worship. The Commission also called on the international community, particularly the United Nations mechanisms and the Human Rights Council's special measures, to take necessary measures to challenge practices targeting Muslims.

The Commission discussed the situation of the **Turkish Muslim Minority in Western Thrace in Greece** and condemned the violations of their religious freedoms, as well as the denial of their ethnic identity. The Commission regretted the Greek Government's denial to recognize the elected Muftis' status of the Turkish Muslim Minority, not allowing Muslims to establish their own cemeteries outside the Western Thrace region and restricting the number of minority schools, thus denying them the right to education. The Commission also expressed deep concern as regards the non-implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights by Greece concerning the right to freedom of assembly of the Non-Governmental Organizations of the Turkish Muslim Minority and urged Greece to implement the said judgement in line with the OIC/CFM resolution (No. 3/49-MM).

The Commission noted that **Turkish Cypriot** people are unable to exercise their economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights, due to the unjust isolation imposed upon them. The Commission expressed its deep concern over the human rights situation of Turkish Cypriots. The Commission calls upon the OIC Member States to strengthen effective solidarity with the Muslim Turkish Cypriots and to take concrete steps to end the inhumane isolation imposed upon them in line with the call made by the UN Secretary-General in his Report of 28 May 2004 and the assessments made by the UN Secretary-General's following reports as well as the OIC resolution (No. 19/49-POL).

The Commission discussed the human rights situation in Yemen within the scope of the CFM mandate given in resolution 14/48-Pol on Solidarity with Yemen and Support for Constitutional Legitimacy as an agenda item, expressing concerns over grave violations of human rights committed by Houthi militias. The Commission, while associating itself with the aforementioned resolution, expresses its deep concerns over the allegations of human rights violations. It also commended the humanitarian efforts provided by Member States to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. The Commission commended the humanitarian efforts provided by the King Salman Center for Humanitarian Relief and Works in Yemen, which amounted to 814 projects at a total cost of \$4.254.329.507 US Dollars.

The Commission, in its deliberations in the **Working Group on Right to Development (RtD)**, had an Interactive Dialogue with a) Ambassador Osama Abdelkhalik, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the



UN, and Coordinator of the OIC Ambassadorial Group in New York; (b) Amb. Hameed Oplayru, Permanent Observer of the OIC to the UN in New York. The experts appreciated the Commission's continued focus and important work on the subject and the adoption of the Abu Dhabi Declaration on RtD, which is being used as a reference document for crafting a legally binding RtD Covenant. The experts highlighted the major obstacles and disagreements that undermined the possibility of adopting a binding legal covenant on the RtD and explored the ways and means to address them. Also, highlighted that despite the elapsing of considerable time since adopting the Declaration on the RtD, the progress is slow and painful as States have paid minimal attention to operationalizing the RtD. They urged for more active engagement by the OIC delegations in New York and Geneva to strengthen the alliance with like-minded developing countries and groups to support discussion and processes aimed at adopting a legally binding instrument on the RtD. The Commission Members discussed the challenges faced in garnering support for the RtD at the international level and inadequate focus within the UN system. They emphasized the need for making coordinated and sustained efforts by the developing countries at all levels. The experts shed light on various aspects of the RtD, including implementation gaps, expected benefits of implementation, various limiting factors, and suggested ways and means for its full and effective realization at national and international levels. They urged the Commission to continue to support the work of the Inter-Governmental Working Group through engagement with experts of the Group, issuing statements in support of the RtD, and acknowledging the work of the IWG. It also urged the Member States to benefit from the practical recommendations contained in the 2nd IPHRC study on the 'Right to Development from IPHRC perspective' to design development initiatives on a human rights-based approach.

The Commission, during the deliberations in the **Working Group on the Rights of Women and Children**, received a detailed briefing from the OIC General Secretariat (GS) on various activities related to the political, economic, and social empowerment of women, advancement of their status, protection of their human rights, operationalization of mechanisms for implementation of OIC Plan of Action for Advancement of Women (OPAAW) and progress made in the operationalization of Women Development Organization (WDO) and exploring ways and means to establish mutual collaborations and carry joint projects. The Working Group also had an **Interactive Dialogue** with a) Ambassador Osama Abdelkhalek, Coordinator of the OIC Ambassadorial Group in New York; (b) Amb. Hameed Oplayru, Permanent Observer of the OIC to UN in New York, in which matters related to the empowerment of the institution of family and marriage and countering the agenda of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) were discussed. The Commission underscored that protecting and promoting the human rights of Women and the Child remains one of the priority areas of IPHRC's work. The Commission highlighted that denying women and girls their basic right to education, including exposure to scientific and digital technologies, has widened the digital divide and caused a colossal loss to the gross domestic product of low and middle-income countries. The wanton and negligent exclusion of women and girls from academia, science and technology, and digital information technologies reflects the denial of their rights, which requires unified global action. The need to equate and balance the concept of women's equality with equity was also highlighted. The Commission also re-affirmed the need for developing collaborative and cooperative networks with UN and international NGOs to promote women, family, and child rights. Also, it cautioned against the attempts of some of these organizations and other parties to introduce and promote concepts like so-called sexual rights, freedom of sexual orientation, right to abortion and misuse of word 'gender' etc., which are incompatible with socio-cultural and religious norms of the Islamic countries. Also, based on a mandate from the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, the Commission shall conduct a study on the analysis of sexual orientation and gender identity from the perspective of international human rights law



to formulate a legally sound argument that would resonate well to strengthen support against the SOGI and rebut the attempts of SOGI lobby to market this agenda within the multilateral diplomatic community.

As part of its work, the Commission discussed and adopted a thematic study on the subject of ***'Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons in Asian Context'***, authored by Dr. Aydin Safikhanli.

The Commission also considered the draft of the Method of Interaction with NGOs and Civil Society and deliberated upon it further before it can be finalized during the upcoming 22<sup>nd</sup> Session. The Commission also agreed to work on the mandate from the CFM to devise an OIC-IPHRC Strategic Plan of Action with specific goals and deliverables in line with the human rights objectives and principles of the OIC Charter and OIC TYPOA-2025 to benchmark the progress of the Commission. Accordingly, a 3 Member Task Force is constituted with representatives from each Regional Group to deliberate and prepare a preliminary draft of the strategy paper.

The Executive Director of IPHRC Secretariat, Professor Noura bint Zaid Al-Rashoud, provided a comprehensive briefing on the work of the commission and the outcomes of participation in the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the activities to be implemented in 2023, and briefed the members of the commission on the status of the resources available to the secretariat and the importance of defining the roadmap for action to set new goals and plans.

In his closing remarks, IPHRC Chairperson, Ambassador Muhammad Lawal Suleiman, thanked the OIC Secretary General and his entire team for their praiseworthy cooperation and logistical support and assured him that the Commission would continue collaborating with the GS on all human rights issues of concern to the Ummah. He also thanked all Member States for their support, interest, and active participation in the activities of the Commission; and commended the host country for its continued strong support to the Commission and its Secretariat for smooth conduct and performance of their mandated duties and tasks.

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