



Association des Chercheurs Iraniens

Date: Tuesday, 27 April 2010
Ref: 172/M/384

His Excellency Hamidon Ali
President of ECOSOC
UN - NY

Your Excellency,

Islamic Republic and membership of CSW

We are writing to express our grave concern at the news that the Islamic Republic may be joining the Commission on the Status of Woman.

With respect Sir, this is a warning to a Commission whose function and duty is to ensure gender equality and advancement of women globally based on universal values of human rights.

As far as the struggle for gender equality is concerned there is nothing new to the well established fact that religion, tradition and cultural identity cannot be used as an excuse for violation of universal rights accorded in international standards.

If taken to its extreme, as is the case in Iran, the argument that human rights are culturally relative rather than universal leads to legal and institutional discrimination based on gender and religion. These contradictions and violations of international obligations are well known to the UN and CSW in particular.

While violence and discrimination against women is not exclusive to the Islamic Republic there is perhaps one difference, the will to improve the situation. As you well know Sir, other Muslim states at least show willingness to improve the situation by for example ratifying CEDAW albeit conditionally.

However, while representatives of the Islamic Republic have been lobbying and negotiating to secure their position in the Commission, the members of Islamic Consultative Assembly in Iran have been debating a so called 'Family Protection Bill' that will legalise polygamy on application to court without even the knowledge of the first wife.

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Islamic Republic's application to join CSW is an outright abuse of the UN system and utter contempt for universal values of equality and justice for which many human rights defenders are in detention in Iran today.

In view of the fact that the universality of human rights has been clearly established and recognized in international law; that human rights are emphasized among the purposes of the United Nations as proclaimed in its Charter, which states that human rights are "for all without distinction" and that these rights are further established by the two international covenants - ICESCR and ICCPR - we look forward to the day when Islamic Republic is brought to account for its discriminatory treatment of women in its laws and policies and that politics do not get in the way of defending the status of women in Iran.

Respectfully

Hossein Ladjevardi

Dr Hossein Ladjevardi
President - ACI

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