



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/8/NGO/14
27 May 2008

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Eighth session
Agenda item 6

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

**Written statement* submitted by Bahrain Women Association (BWA),
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2008]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Violation of Basic Rights for Bahraini Women

Bahrain Women Association would like to discuss a violation and deprivation of two of the fundamental and basic essential rights Bahraini women are experiencing. One is regarding Bahraini women who choose either voluntary or involuntary, to marry a non- Bahraini man, are denied the right to extend their citizenship to their children. These children have no access to citizenship, and are thus excluded from the rights granted to citizens. These rights include but are not limited to, access to high education, healthcare, land ownership, political participation, employment and last but not least possession of a nationality. This inequality, not only denies women their basic rights as citizens, it also denies children their basic rights as human beings. This has long and short term negative effect on the physical, mental and psychological health of those children. In many cases where these women are widowed, divorced or abandoned, the situation becomes worse. Currently, the main work and lobbying to help in resolving this issue is handled by the Nationality Campaign which works together with other Arab countries under the umbrella of Regional Nationality campaign at Beirut.

Current nationality code in Bahrain violates the spirit and letter of all international conventions relating to the issue of women and nationality. These include but are not limited to, The Constitution of Kingdom of Bahrain, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Although Bahrain mentioned in its report that "a draft law on citizenship is being debated to avoid negative effect which could result from not granting nationality to the children of Bahraini mothers who are married to non-Bahrainis", this draft does not include any change in Article 4. This means it remains the same as of not permitting Bahraini mothers married to non-Bahrainis to grant Bahraini nationality to their children. Lately, even this draft was withdrawn from the parliament. This is considered as a step backward toward achieving this essential right for Bahraini women and their children. Bahrain also stated that: "the constitution guarantees equality between men and women" but this is not applied accordingly.

The number of children from Bahraini mothers whom has no nationality is increasing because of new marriages. This in turn, increases the pain and suffering of the mothers and their children. Having in mind that the government did provide Bahraini nationality to thousands of non-Bahraini families whom were imported to Bahrain for what is called Political Nationalization.

Another violation for women right is the family law which is not yet approved. The lack of this law is considered to be one of the main obstacles and struggles of women in Bahrain. The government took a positive step when the Supreme Council for Woman started an awareness campaign on Family Law, but it was soon stopped upon applying pressures from some local fundamentalist religious figures.

Nevertheless, we believe the government could have done more to push towards the family law by cooperation with the religious figures that support this law and also coordinate and

work closely with NGOs, especially women NGOs, whom are involved in this issue. Currently, the main work on the family law is conducted by Bahraini Women Union.

In fact, the base of all types of discriminations against women in Bahraini laws is related to the conservations Bahrain government has on the CEDAW, of which are: Article 9 (2) (related to grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children), and Article 16 (related to marriage and family relations).

We hereby ask the Bahraini government for immediate modification on the nationality law to provide women the right to grant their nationality to their children, approve the family law and remove all conservations on the CEDAW. We also would like to emphasize on the recommendations made by Slovenia, Switzerland and Russian Federation, during the interactive dialogue of the Working group on the Universal Periodic Review of Bahrain, conducted in Geneva 7-18 April 2008.
