

# **Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)**

## **Kuwait**

### **Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review**

#### **Eighth Session of the UPR Working Group of the UN Human Rights**

#### **Council**

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#### **About ODVV**

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization in Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). The ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. The ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a participatory of the NGOs Coalition for an International Court (based in New York), and national coordinator of the Global March Against Child Labour (based in New Delhi) which cooperated in a variety of issues with international organizations and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. The ODVV is also a member of the International Organization against Small and Light Weapons, and the UN Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), and the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centres in the Middle East and North Africa, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT).

4. During the last 2 decades, we have done so many activities, mainly informative in regards with human rights and supportive in regards with the victims of violence. Various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, conferences have been held or co-held by the ODVV for various sectors of society: civil society institutions and governmental organizations.

#### **5. Other Activities:**

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights annual sessions, and the new Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva. Written and oral statements on various items of the agenda are issued by the ODVV.
- Internship for foreign students
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia. Publication of Defenders Newsletter

(English), human rights news and developments bulletin (Farsi), Rights of the Child bulletin (Farsi

- Daily electronic human rights newsletter in English and Farsi

## **Background**

6. Kuwait is a party to several international human rights treaties, including:

- a) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- b) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- c) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- d) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- e) Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery;
- f) Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others;
- g) United Nations Convention against Torture;
- h) Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- i) Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor;
- j) Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor;
- k) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention;
- l) Abolition of Forced Labor Convention;
- m) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention; and
- n) Convention against Discrimination in Education.

7. Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate ruled by the Al-Sabah family with a population of 3.39 million, of which 1.3 million are citizens.

8. With a high level of adult literacy (93.3 per cent) and also a proportionate GDP, Kuwait is a typical country in the region which unfortunately lacks some important features in Human Rights, especially on basis of Migrant workers.

## **Migrant Workers**

9. Migrant workers in Kuwait continue to suffer a wide range of abuses. Most vulnerable were the many thousands of women employed as domestic servants, mostly nationals of south and south-east Asian countries. They suffered double discrimination, as women and because domestic workers continued to be excluded from the protections afforded to other expatriate workers under the 1964 labor law. Women domestic workers commonly worked excessive hours for little pay and alleged that they were subject to physical and other abuse, including sexual abuse, at the hands of their employers, against which, in practice, they often had no remedy. The minimum wage for foreign domestic workers was reported to be less than the minimum wage.

10. A standardized contract for foreign domestic workers introduced in October 2006 led to some improvements, although it appeared to have worsened the situation for domestic

workers facing physical or other abuse by their employer by banning them from transferring to a different employer. Under the contract, domestic workers who leave their employer or are dismissed will be deported.

### **Recommendations**

11. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence urges the government of Kuwait to:

- a) Sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
- b) Start a real and severe Anti Trafficking reform to protect the rights of those who come to country to work.
- c) Try to decrease the number of deported workers by substituting this regular punishment with other forms of penalties.

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