

Executive Summary:

This report is submitted with due respect by the Women International Union of the Follower of the Monotheistic and focused on studying the position and situation of the minorities and followers of the monotheistic religions in Iran, according to its studies, our union has concluded that although the Islamic Republic of Iran has made comprehensive efforts to improve the situation of the minorities especially after 2010, but still the issue of minorities situation requires more considerations and examinations.

In this report, the participation of the NGOs, especially the followers of the monotheistic religions and religious minorities in removal of the legal, civil, political and social issues and problems, especially the female minorities and eventually certain suggestions have been given for the Iranian movement towards removal of the problems of religious minorities as well as responding the suggestions presented during the first UPR of this country.

Some of these suggestions include the following:

- Requesting the Iranian government to consider the constitutional law, especially the rules governing the religious minorities,
- Interacting and taking benefit from the experiences of the international organizations and NGOs of the other countries,
- Training the governmental employees as well as the public opinions for more understanding the social and civil involvement of the religious minorities.

Keywords:

Minorities, religion, women, civil, political, social, legal, employment, society, involvement, Armenians, Jews, Assyrians

Introduction of the Organization:

1. The Women International Union of the Follower of the Monotheistic is a non-governmental, non-political and non-profitable body which commenced its activities in 2012 with the purpose of affecting and changing the global society's approaches with respect to the issue of women and family and promoting the humanistic position of women based on religious culture, deepening, stabilizing and effecting the basic common values, beliefs, ethics and legal aspects of the religions on the field of women in Iran. Additionally, striving to make good the judgments, pre-judgments and negative mentalities attributed to religion in the field of women and her social position through discussion, roundtable and mutual understanding, establishing culture, etc. are considered from amongst the objectives of this union. Meanwhile, modeling and promoting the practical models of famous women of the monotheistic religions, inter alia, Hazrat Fatimah (PBUH) and St. Mary, in the international society is the main target of this union. The convergence of the divine religions based on the cooperation of the women following the monotheistic religions is one of the other objectives of this union, as the main subject matter of activity of this union is in the religious, cultural, legal and social issues and the relevant target society include the women following monotheistic

religions in the national and international levels. Additionally, one of the other purposes of this center is to promote the capabilities of the women and families to reduce the individual and social vulnerabilities.

2. From amongst the activities of Women International Union of the Follower of the Monotheistic include holding international meetings, conferences, summits through inviting the experts, elites and theory makers of the monotheistic religions in the subjects relevant to the women in the international society through the media and following up the women-related news.

Basic Recommendations:

3. This report has been drawn up with the purpose of following up the following suggestions presented during the Iran's first UPR (2010):

- (1) Promoting and protecting the rights of the recognized religious minorities (Armenia),
- (2) Protecting the rights of the religious minorities (Denmark),
- (3) Sharing the experiences relevant to protect the minorities cultural heritage (Armenia),

Status of the Recommendation in the Past, Present and Desirable Future:

4. It is more than 4,000 years that the Assyrians and Armenians as Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians are living peacefully besides their follow Muslim compatriots as the main non-Muslim Iranians. A view on the past of the religious minorities in the Pre-1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran indicates that there have been certain problems in addressing religious minorities; so that in the previous regime's constitutional law, the religious minorities were named as the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians residing in Iran, while such problem was removed in the Constitutional Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran and they named as the Iranian Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians.

5. Iran is a country with religious beliefs. Therefore, all the Iranians certainly respect for the state's recognized religious minorities. According to the constitutional law, all the Iranian people have equal citizenship rights notwithstanding the religion and race; additionally, the monotheistic religions practice their own religions and have no limitation in this regard. After the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian recognized religious minorities enjoy more principal rights and freedoms, of which the relevant basis has been provided by the constitutional law. Notwithstanding the fact that instructing the religion and language of the tribes and owners of the relevant religions have been recognized in the constitutional law.

6. Meanwhile, according to the Article No. 64 of the constitutional law, two MPs for the Armenian Christians and one MP for each Assyrian & Kaldanian Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews has been recognized. Unlike other countries, such MPs have not been provided merely appropriated to the population, but in other words, even in case the number of the religious minorities populations declines less than the required quorum due to any reason such as immigration, still as per the constitutional law five MPs shall be devoted to them, which indicates the certain interest of the majority Iranians to the religious minorities.

7. It has been for years now that the state courts shall observe the regulations of the authenticity of the minorities, including the religious rules governing their heirs, wills, marriage and divorce; and in such assumptions while enquiring from, the religious authorities of the claimants, the courts shall execute the regulations governing their religions without any change, which is not observed in many of the neighboring and regional countries.

8. The places belonged to the religious minorities, such as Ararat Club and Tehran Assyrians Society host the Iranian New Year and spring bazaar which are held through the attendance of the Muslims and non-Muslims without any limitation. Meanwhile, existence of the non-Muslim societies' holy places is another reason in proving this issue. All the religions have holy places, while even in some cases the renovation and reconstruction costs of the same are budgeted by the government.

9. There are 300 churches, 700 historical and 50 active synagogues and around 20 fire temples of Zoroastrians throughout the country, some of which have historical background and also been registered with the UNESCO. During the recent years, around 40 churches have been renovated and reconstructed enjoying the supports and finances of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization and until now around 27 churches and shrines of the religious minorities have been registered in the list of the Iranian national and historical heritage list.

10. Ten outlets offering meat with Jewish slaughter, four restaurants and more than 20 cultural organizations and NGOs are active for the Jews.

11. For the time being, the Non-Muslim Iranians fulfill their religious, social and even political practices. Several societies and organizations are responsible for the religious and social affairs of the non-Muslim Iranians, all of which have been officially registered and act as per their legal permissions. The boards of directors of such bodies have independent identities who are elected without and involvement of the governmental bodies and through the direct voting of the members of such religious minorities and each year the government extends and issues their activity permissions and license in the names of the new members. Such companionship of the Muslim with Non-Muslim Iranians is up to the level that even the Iranians interact with each other in many political, religious and social events.

12. The Iranian Christians hold their religious ceremonies such as Easter, Christmas and New Gregorian Year totally free. Whereas in Iran Sunday is a weekday and Friday is weekend, in some churches the Lord's Supper ceremonies are even held on Fridays in addition to Sundays, so that the employed and enthusiastic believers may take benefit from these ceremonies. Also the Jewish and Zoroastrian compatriots freely hold their ceremonies such as Pash, Hebrew new year (Roshan Hashna), Sadeh, Mehregan, Farvardinegan, etc.

13. This is a big achievement that after the Islamic Revolution, the number of the Iranian Jewish females went to college (either as student or instructor) has increased and today more than 70% of the religious minority women in 25-45 age group have academic education and more than 90% of the Jewish community are either student or graduates and at least four of them are either university professors or asst. professors.

14. The Christians sports Olympiad is held semiannually in Tehran and Oroumīyeh. It should be noted that in many cases the government assigns an allowance for such events from the state budget for better holding the same. Unlike many countries, the children of the people of state recognized religious minorities answer their own religion's questions in the academic competitions and universities entrance exams and there is no difference between them and other Muslim compatriots in terms of calculation of the passing grade.

16. Many of the Iranian recognized religious minorities thinkers are studying and instructing in the high level of the Iranian universities and nobody bothers them.

17. Non- Muslims physicians, engineering and lawyers are working in Iran and there is no problem in referring to them by the Muslims.

18. The Iranian society is looking for removal of the issues and problems and considers the presence and existence of the non-Muslim Iranians are quite important, inter alia, the discussion on the equality of the religious minorities blood money established through the explicit and direct Fatwa of Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2003, which resulted in insertion of a legal note in the Islamic Penal Law in this regard.

19. Although after the revolution the Islamic Republic of Iran has highly considered the issue of the religious minorities, especially the females following the monotheistic religions, but certain issues such as sanctions may cause problems in this regard. According to the Women International Union of the Follower of the Monotheistic, it is desirable that along the pathway of the 5th development document, the different issues of the religious minorities are precisely and carefully controlled and monitored by the governmental and nongovernmental bodies.

Methodology (method of collecting data)

20. In order to present this report, the Women International Union of the Follower of the Monotheistic have applied a variety of methods: political and legal studies (assessment of the local and international policies and rules especially in the subject relevant to the rule governing the right of using the services of women in the scientific, academic, economic and social fields); studying the research findings (library, article, media, case and field studies).

Advancements

21. Regarding the statistical studying the social and economic involvement of the religious minorities, especially the women following monotheistic religions, it indicates a significant improvement in the status of the Iranian religious minorities after the Islamic Revolution and especially within the past 4 years. During the past 4 years, the issues of religious minorities' rules have seen advancements in certain fields as per the following:

Legislative

22. In 2012, a law was ratified in the Islamic Consultative Assembly, by virtue of which the subscription fee and costs of water, electricity and gas bills of the mosques of temples of the religious minorities became free of charge.

Executive

23. In 2010, two billion and two hundred million Tomans was assigned by the Tehran Municipality for the construction of the conference hall of Assyrians. The construction of this hall has been under the supervision of the municipality and the executives of Tehran Assyrians.

24. In 2011, 1 M\$ was assigned in the state budget to Dr. Sapir Jewish Charity Hospital. This hospital has especially focused on the pre and post baby delivery cares for the low income families. For the time being, this hospital has become active in the fields of preventing different types of cancer. Such activity depends on the huge assistance and cooperation of the Iranian government and ministry of health. This hospital is, located in one of the central regions of Tehran, is referred by all the Iranian people in need, notwithstanding their religions and now more than 90% of its patients are non-Jews.

25. In 2012, 1 billion Rials was assigned to the religious minorities during annual budgeting.

26. In 2012, 100 million Toomans was devoted by ministry of sports and youths for Assyrians cultural and sports festival.

27. In 2013, 130 million Toomans was assigned by Tehran municipality for construction of religious minorities' park.

28. In 2013, 5 billion Toomans was assigned as the cultural budget of the religious minorities by the Islamic Consultative Assembly, indicating an increase of 1 billion Toomans in comparison to the year before.

29. In 2013, a deputyship, namely the deputyship of religious minorities and tribes was established by the president's office, where certain advisors from religious minorities attend and handle all the affairs of the religious minorities.

30. Between 2009 and 2011, 38 million Toomans assigned for the religious minorities women NGOs activities by the Center of Women and Family Affairs.

31. Although certain efforts have been made within the 3 decades after the Islamic Revolution for the promotion of the economic and social involvement of the religious minorities especially the women following monotheistic religions, we hope that certain motions are made to improve their situation from now one, as well.

Judicial

32. In 1991, according to the Article 297 of the Islamic Penal Law, the previous approval was amended, in a way that the blood money of Muslims and non- Muslims became equal.

33. In 2012, a law was ratified by the judiciary for the guardianship of the religious minorities' children, by virtue of which these children shall have non-Muslim guardians.

NGOs

34. During the recent years, due to the increased number of the organizations involved in the minorities issues and their focus on the minorities rights and civil and political participation, a significantly better atmosphere has been formed in comparison to the past on the public and society understanding with respect to the promotion of the civil, political and social participation of the religious minorities, especially the women following monotheistic religions. Meanwhile, the level of involvement and companionship of the charitable people in this field within the specified term has

significantly increased. In this regard, several practical workshops, seminars and speeches have been held regarding the problems of the religious minorities women related to and by cooperation of other NGOs in Iran.

Challenges and Problems

35. Notwithstanding the aforementioned advancements and the promotion of the general basis in this regard, still there are certain challenges and problems including:

36. The approved budget in 2013 for the religious minorities has not been completely paid up; however, it is due to the fact that still the total state budget has not been completely ratified and so it has affected the complete payment of the religious minorities' budget.

37. The constructive and satisfactory relationship between Jewish and non- Jewish Iranians helped them to have more efforts for the country and social activities. However, unfortunately, these days imperialism and Zionism take benefit from improper propaganda and aggregation and try to disrupt the healthy and friendly relationships among the Iranian Jews and Muslims.

38. Considering such historical record and presence in the social and political scenes, all the Iranian tribes and different religions followers have had considered themselves as originally Iranians for centuries. Besides the Muslim compatriot, the Iranian religious minorities have attended in all the times and eras in the stages of revolution, holy defense (Iran- Iraq war), and constructiveness, etc. and been purely devoted. It is represented in the high number of the religious minorities martyrs of war, including Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews who defended the sovereign, lives and principles of our country during the 8-year imposed and unequal war. However, unfortunately, without having any precise recognition of the situation of the tribes and followers of the monotheistic religions inside Iran, the European and Western community try to hide the existing facts and show the position and situation of the Iranian religious minorities in the international field as altered documented on their own opinions and exaggerations of the enemies of Iran.

39. Disrespecting the divine religions and prophets is considered as an offense in the international regulations, according to which insulting Jesus Christ (PBUH) shall be punished by execution. Evidently, insulting holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) shall also be punished by virtue of the same rules. However, not only the frequent instances of insulting the holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and the principal beliefs of Muslims have not been condemned by those claiming for the human rights, but also the West has neglected its compiled rules in this regard, which contradicts with freedom and democracy.

40. The sanctions applied by the Western governments and the USA in excuse of limiting and punishing the Iranian government obviously proves the breach of human rights, because it has resulted in several problems for the entire Iranian people, including the religious minorities in different fields, including health and therapy and accessing vital drugs.



Suggestions and Solutions:

41. Insulting persons in considered as an offense throughout the world and even heavy punishments have been considered for the same in some of the countries. Therefore, it is better that in order to respect divine religions, the law to fight insulting the divine religions be compiled in the international societies. The legal community and international societies shall continue publishing different statements and condemn the unethical actions and so make the international societies to compile certain rules to confront insulting divine religions.

42. Applying sanctions is one of the most unacceptable methods against the vital rights of a nation. In this regard, there is no difference between the Muslim and non-Muslim brothers. Removal of sanctions may be considered as an action to restore the human rights and respecting the followers of the monotheistic religions.

43. Along the constitutional law, the different issues of the religious minorities' rights are considered in all fields.

44. The governmental supports from the healthy and constructive activities of the religious minorities increase.

45. The living, employment, practicing religious ceremonies, educational opportunities, facilities and social services rendered to the religious minorities are well informed to the same, so that the global public may judge well as per the relevant realities.