

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Forum on Minority Issues
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Intervention for item V or VII of the provisional agenda

The Learning Environment and School Governance/The Content and Delivery of the Curriculum

Madam President of the Forum on Minority Issues

I have read with much attention the draft recommendations of this forum, which are based on the experience of minorities in the world. I believe that such recommendations would be supportive for the rights of the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia, which only 15-20% of this population enjoys the right to education in accordance with international human rights standards.

Madam President...

We and our desire to advance the well being of our country and all of its citizens and given the education system is one of the most important factors contributing to the advancement of civilization founded on tolerance, therefore, we present these recommendations that we hope will be embraced by our government.

1. There should be a building of educational rights and educational policies on the principles of citizenship, equality and non-discrimination among citizens for whatever reason. This is because the basic principles of international human rights asserts it is the duty of the states to carry out the right to carry out to the best of its abilities the rights to education through equality and without discrimination. States must enact and amend legislation where appropriate in order to eliminate discrimination. In our country, there is still a narrowing of opportunities for the Shiite minority to naturally enroll in universities, in particular in medical and scientific disciplines. Not allowing them the opportunities to join institutes, security universities and diplomatic institutes.

2. Provide the opportunity for minorities to integrate them into society and compensate for former deprivation from educational institutions and administrative positions in order to ensure their fair representation and restoring the balance in this context. Thus this will allow minorities to have the right to participate in public life and in decisions affecting their education system, including the right to design and implement programmes of education and management of educational institutions. States should create conditions that enable minority representatives to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of

policies and programmes relating to the education of minorities. Anxiety from the Shiite minority comes mainly from their inability to have administrative positions in neither in higher or lower educational institutions, particularly in female institutions.

3. Education must contribute to the elimination of prejudices among the population and promote mutual respect, understanding and tolerance among all the people residing in the state, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or culture. The Saudi religion courses are filled with a lot of abuse to the Shi'a religion directly and indirectly forcing the minority group to study and take exams that do not represent their principles. It is the duty of the state to ensure a welcoming learning environment for the children of minorities and not an unsafe environment for them. Unfortunately though, it is not allowed for the children of the Shiite community to form their own religious curriculum to raise them by or educate them with.

4. Allow the Shiite minority to establish educational institutions in religious and public disciplines. This is to ensure parents or legal guardians have the liberty to choose for their children institutions other than those established by the state authorities, ensuring that the religious and moral education their children receive is in conformity with their own convictions. The state should not hinder the enjoyment of this right by imposing any legal barriers or other conditions from establishing and managing these institutions. There still exists concern given there is currently no opportunity for citizens from the Shi'a minority to establish special educational institutions in any of the religious or public disciplines. Members of the Shi'a minority are not granted licenses needed to establish special daycares and schools even those that know the current official curriculum.

5. And where it is necessary to have different forms of education including curricula and teaching methods acceptable to the parents and children that is relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality the state must modify the general education curriculum and the public education in the area of Shiite religious belief, as it is stipulated in the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities.

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