

The Question Of Muslim Minorities and Communities In The World

I am honored to present on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) this paper on the Issue of Muslim Minorities and Communities living in non- member states of the OIC in this important forum.

Ladies and gentlemen Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim states are about 500 million Muslim, which constitute one third of the total Muslim population. With such a large population spread all over .the continents , specially in Asia ,Africa, Europe and growing population in the United States , the complexity of political , social , economical problems of these minorities have gained immense importance for the OIC . As a second largest international organization in the world, the OIC assumed intervention roles to help the Muslims for more than thirty years, when it had established a department of Muslim Minorities and communities, with the aim to reach out the Muslims in those countries where they have been resided and 'to address to their problems in amicable way with the consideration of the sovereignty of the host countries and with the cooperation of the states' governments. During the past thirty years, the OIC has engaged in the policy of helping the Muslim minorities to redeem their rights within the fabric of legal constitutional order in those states and Where there is absence of such. legal protection by helping through political means to provide a cover at the minimum, of the same standards extended to other citizens of that country.

In the transformation which has taken place for the Muslim minorities, since the last few decades, the OIC has considered this issue essential to reiterate their rights 'through its various Ministerial and Summit Meetings to extend protection of Muslims and the same has also been enshrined in the OIC charter, and various, resolutions taking notice of rights of the Muslim minorities globally and in specific context , as the question of the Muslim Minorities in Southern Philippines , the Muslim minorities in Western Thrace, the question of Muslim minorities in Myanmar, the question of Muslim communities in southern Thailand, the question of Muslims minorities in India, China, Bulgaria ,the Balkan.

In this context' the rubric of the OIC's policy keeping in the view the realities on the ground have been over the years pursued through the following Strategies:

- Keeping channels Of contact with the Muslim minorities and assisting them to interact with the OIC member states and the OIC General Secretariat to learn about their needs, state of treatment extended. by the state and extending them support and advices.
- Developing relations or direct contacts with those countries having Muslim Minorities to underline the need to preserve their rights, through negotiations and engagement in 'constructive and

diplomatic dialogue, in full consideration for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the concerned country.

Assisting the Muslim minorities in their dialogue with their governments for assimilation and co-existence with other minorities

- Seeking cooperation from Islamic organizations and institutions to cater for the economic and social needs for them.

The dimensions of the minority's problem received particular attention by the international community while establishing human rights standards. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, in unconditional upheld the right of minorities and communities without making any distinction based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The principle was again reiterated in Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, in article 27 going beyond the UNDHR and the subsequent declaration of the General Assembly adopted through resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992.¹

Thus, the rights of Muslim Minorities have human rights dimension as the rights of minorities' narrows on the issues of how much freedom they enjoy in any given context. Inter-related to the' enjoyment of rights are the issues of conflict between the Minorities and communities bordering on specific rights guaranteed by the state constitutions and legal orders to such minorities, nevertheless., being denied through different means, often through circumventing of such rights trough adverse legislation or use of force in suppressing it.

It right to say that the problem of the minorities is not confined Only to the Muslim Minorities, but it has broader implication in many non-member countries often; ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious political peculiarities have led to the denial of rights.

As the OIC aims to promote with UN-international peace and security all over the world , the OIC also wishes to co-operate with the UN along with the Human Rights Council, in order to bring up such important issue of Muslim minorities to the attention of the biggest international body.

Thank you for listening.

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