



The Human Rights Council

Forum on Minority Issues

Guaranteeing the Rights of Minority Women

4th Session

Geneva, November 29-30, 2011

Intervention concerning Item 5 of the Work Programme:

Minority Women and **effective** participation in economic, social and cultural life.

Intervention introduced by Maha Rashid of the organisation **Al-Mustaqbal (Future) for Development** / Taiz – Yemen.

Thank you Mr President for this opportunity, and thank you to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for admitting us to the Minorities Fellowship Programme which has allowed us to participate in this esteemed forum.

The Al-Akhdam group in Yemen are an ethnic minority. The women belonging to it suffer from unemployment and deliberate marginalisation by society and the state. This is the reason for the spread of the phenomenon of poverty, the move of women towards begging, the spread of ignorance and illiteracy, and the decline of the economy. They work in the most despicable professions which women belonging to other [societal] groups do not accept, where they work as sweepers in the streets (cleaners) or as a servants in houses or as a beggars in the cities. It is very hard for them to find good employment.

Recommendations for the Yemeni government, the UN and human rights mechanisms:

1. The government should allocate the necessary resources to expand the available job opportunities and to correct the imbalance in the representation and participation of Al-Akhdam women, their access to the labor market and their benefit from economic progress and development.
2. The government should aim to achieve better representation for Al-Akhdam women and include them in public sector jobs and civil service, law enforcement agencies, social services and other administrative bodies. The government should demand that employers in the private sector comply fully with the legislation against discrimination, including the discrimination based on origin and ethnicity, and guarantee their inclusion in budgets and programmes relating to the empowerment of Al-Akhdam Women in the

economic field.

3. Development agencies should cooperate with the government and the Civil Society to identify the obstacles to [their] development and to tackle the underlying root causes behind the numerous and intertwined forms of discrimination which Al-Akhdam women experience and which leads to their economic, social and cultural exclusion.

Thank you for listening.