

Human Rights Council
Forum on Minority Issues
Guaranteeing the Rights of Minority Women
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Item 4 of the Work Programme: Minority Women and Effective Political Participation

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Thank you Madame Chair of the Forum for granting us this opportunity,

And thank you, High Commissioner for Human Rights, for accepting us to the Minorities Fellowship Programme, which gave us the opportunity to participate in this valuable forum.

Let us begin with the status of Mauritanian women belonging to the minority group, the "Haratin", whose situation we are trying to change through our organization by eliminating slavery and serfdom, which is considered to be one of the greatest impediments to their development, and exists as a reality on the ground in spite of the international treaties previously ratified by Mauritania. We also strive to mobilise their participation in political life.

Madame Chair: The issue and suffering of women belonging to the Haratin minority does not only lie in slavery being practiced upon them, rather, the reality goes even farther than that, whereby they are excluded from political participation, ignored, exploited in homes as servants without wages, and raped by their masters. This phenomenon can no longer be tolerated with silence, which has reached the level of collusion and absence of justice before the Mauritanian judiciary.

The essence of the problem which Haratin women are suffering from, stems from the negative political, economic and even cultural practices of past decades, which led to a

strengthening of ethnic and tribal figures at the expense of the Haratin, as well as the work to systematically exclude them from centers of decision-making.

Recommendations to the Mauritanian Government

1. We recommend that the Mauritanian government establish legislation granting Haratin women the right of political participation through the "quota" system, transitionally.
2. Working on Legislation for the "Domestic Workers" labour sector, in order to guarantee the rights of female Mauritanian workers in general, and Haratin women specifically, because they comprise the majority of workers in this sector.
3. Review the Mauritanian constitution in order to insert amendments that grant the Haratin with complete political, social, economic and cultural rights, along the same lines as other minority groups in Mauritania.
4. The government should provide financial, logistical, and technical support to legal organisations working in the field of minority rights, especially the "Haratin", to ensure development in the field of human rights.

Thank you for listening, and we hope for a bright tomorrow for all.