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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Forum on Minority Issues
Geneva, 28 — 30 November 2011

YAM e.V.

Kurdish Centre
for Legal Studies
and Consultancy

Madam Chair, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Madam President, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the situation of the Kurdish woman in Syria. My name is Mohammad Miro Hasyniani. I am from YASA, the Kurdish Centre for Legal Studies and Consultancy. Our organization advocates the rights of the estimated three million Kurds in Syria.

Kurdisches Zentrum
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Although women played influential and important leadership roles in decision-making positions throughout history, their participation was neither recognized nor rewarded. And as a result, they have suffered discrimination in male-dominated society. Moreover, women's oppression is institutionalized reality in which they undergo various social conditions within patriarchy.

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Like other oppressed women in the world, Syrian women experience various forms of oppression based on gender and social status in their traditional patriarchal society. In Syria, where the current situation is deplorable because of the government's brutal crackdown on peaceful demonstrators, women and children are more susceptible to violence. Under Syrian laws (article 548-192) women are deprived of their basic and social rights because the state and its legal system legitimate patriarchal control of women. For example, men in Syria get lenient treatment under the law, which allows for reduced punishments for honour killings. Although the Syrian government ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, it has some reservations about the rights of Syrian women to pass on their citizenship to their children. Therefore, Syrian women cannot change their status quo and eradicate all forms of discrimination embedded in the structure of society.

In addition to all these forms of oppression inflicted on Syrian women, Kurdish women in Syria are subject to double discrimination because of their gender and ethnicity. Like all Kurds in Syria, Kurdish women have been deprived of the basic human rights, especially political, cultural, and civil rights. Consequently, Kurdish women in Syria have been marginalized by the Syrian government which pursues discriminatory policies against Kurds. These repressive policies began in 1962 when more than 150,000 Kurds were stripped of the Syrian nationality. Syr-

ian Kurds were also deprived of their lands which were assigned to landless Arabs, and therefore Kurdish people lost their property, and their region has been arabized. Moreover, the situation of Kurdish women in Syria worsened because they were isolated from the public sphere and the rest of society, and thus they were subjected to violence and exploited by their community. As a result, Kurdish women's participation in the Syrian political life has been limited.

In order to eliminate the oppression of Syrian women in general and Kurdish women in particular, it is necessary to reconstruct the basic structures of social institutions, which in turn would lead to the full participation of women in the development of the Syrian society.

Thank you very much.

Mohammad Hasyniani

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