

Female, Arabic speech

It is due to say that the sectorial conflict and violence against the minorities has increased in the Middle East and Asia over the last few years. It is also true to say that there is a more heinous development in the struggle and conflict against denominational groups, which leads to become sectarian in a very bloody way. It is also true to say that this is linked in one way or another with the international and regional conflict that is taking place in the region, and the control over the region. Whether it is linked to the Arab revolution or the transitional situations to occupations in material, economic, and other forms. It is true to say that such increasing violence has been fed to feed the interests of major powers in a manner that would guarantee their strategies internationally and regionally. Many examples have been given yesterday and today; and there confirm that the rights of the minorities and marginalised groups, including women's rights, are being bargained over, and being paddled not only at a national level but also regionally and internationally in a manner and in an attempt to partition roles and influence. We have to see that religion and belief as a part of the components of culture but not all of it. However, it becomes a major component when minorities have to defend themselves or their cultural existence in the absence of democracy and equality, which means that these groups fold inwards and when they find that they are unable to integrate in their societies and they cannot have special cultural and social laws that protect their religions and their conditions especially for the management of their societies and personal [laws]. This leads to marginalisation and discrimination amongst these marginalised social groups, particularly women. We have to also see that because of wars, conflicts and the absence of security, it seems that it becomes even more difficult for women to reach education, and it becomes impossibility. Whereas the women and the culture of minority groups or groups that face violence, women are considered the weak element, therefore she is protected even if it means depriving her from going to school. This is what happened to the Arabic minority in Palestine with the inception of the state of Israel. This is what happens daily in Palestine because of the wall and because of the checkpoints, barriers of the occupation. And this is what happened in Lebanon, and during the civil war and this is what is happening today in Iraq and Libya. Hence, illiteracy is quickly spreading amongst women in particular. Women from belong to minorities are facing violence; their bodies are used as a power struggle between the majority and between the minority. Particularly in developing, as also in advanced country, for we can merely mention sexual jihad in Syria; and the women used to be raped in the conflict, or women who are in the opposition groups on both ends of the spectrum. They are used as slaves, whether they Syrian, Palestinian, Yemenis, there are these marriage contracts to underage women. Women are killed because they fall in love in honour killings. In France or in some Scandinavian countries daily women are subject to many acts of violence and discrimination; and they are a target of, what is called, honour crimes. This is under the pre-text of cultural specificity, which means there is a double standard applied even in Western countries through the laws that are applied to these groups. [Apostasy] among women and minority groups is another crime that can only be punished by death, and this is what happened Christian, Muslim, those groups for any woman who changes her religion. As for social and economic marginalisation, women are not more than 20 per cent of the working class and this is a testimony of the marginalisation of

women not just in the percentage but also as far as the posts that can occupy as their salaries also. In many countries such as Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq even in countries that consider themselves secular we see clear discrimination against women in the personal status law and in the civil rights. There are laws of personal status and not civil law that are applied against women in accordance with each sector or denomination and according to the culture and customs of each group. And this is not just discrimination against women in general - it is in fact discrimination also between the different denominations of women and their religious appurtenance. These are some of the challenges faced or encountered by women and the particularly minority women. I should like to say that the solution is not by feeding more of the religious strife in the Middle East and in other parts of the world but the solution is by adopting international and universal solutions for humanity at large. The establishment of the civil laws, which are based on the separation between state and religion, and the equal rights to both citizens men and women. I have a certain proposal for recommendation, but the Chairpersons [interrupted]

Chairperson stops the speaker.