

## **16<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum on Minority Issues**

### **Dr. Hani Anouti's speech**

Ladies and gentlemen

From Morocco to China – the Middle East included - there is a sea of minorities that are experiencing different forms and patterns of discrimination, exclusion, harassment, politicization, and under-representation.

For 2 days (yesterday and today), many members and defenders of these minorities expressed different forms and patterns of attitudes exercised against them by different countries and political regimes.

In this gloomy and challenging context, I am going to rely on a case study. It is definitely considered to be a successful one if you look at it and compare it to the situation of minorities in the mentioned geographical area and specifically in the Middle East.

Lebanon, a tiny country has provided a great model for minority protection, inclusion, utmost freedom, fair, equal, and proportional representations based on a power sharing agreement from one hand and the historical coexistence among these groups from another.

You might find this example to be surreal because of the political and security situation in this country. Politically speaking it is not the best example – But this is a forum on minorities, so let's just look at this case study from minority inclusion, protection, and their human rights regardless to the current political, security, and economic challenges that exist in this country and the surrounding turbulent Middle East.

The country and its power sharing system is designed at sectarian level and not religious one.

Lebanon is home to different sects and ethnic groups that all together form the Lebanese society. In this small country, there are 18 recognized sects, and around 9 non-recognized sects (yet they are not discriminated against).

From Morocco to China, the only country headed by a president belonging to a minority – Christian - is Lebanon. Not only a Christian, but a Maronite Christian – a minority within the broader Catholic church.

The Lebanese constitution guarantees the rights of minorities to be equal and proportional partners in the Lebanese society. It guarantees their freedom of expression and beliefs in a very diversified country.

Having said that, all laws, norms, practices, and tradition guarantees that.

This is the map of Lebanon – a mosaic of religious and sectarian identities living all together in this small geographical land for centuries:

Light Green: Sunni

Dark green: Shiite

Green: Alawite

Blue: Druze  
Yellow: Greek Orthodox  
Brown: Syriac Orthodox  
Red: Maronite  
Dark purple: Roman Catholic  
Light purple: Evangelical  
Light Orange: Armenian Orthodox  
Light Yellow: Armenian Catholic

The dominant ethnic group is Arab, but also other groups such as Armenians and Kurds are treated equally and enjoys full freedom and representation.

Religious and ethnic divisions that is represented at political, economic, cultural, and other levels

- **At political level:**

The political system guarantees the equal and proportional representations of sects based on equal division between Muslims and Christians. In what is known as the quota system or the power sharing agreement.

For example: The President is a Christian Maronite, Speaker of the Parliament is a Shite Muslim, and the Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim.

This division can be reflected in all bureaucratic positions from ministries, state institutions, security, etc... and of course proportional to each sect according to its number. For example

Commander of the Army: Maronite  
Deputy commander of the Army: Druze  
Commander of the police: Sunni  
Deputy PM: Greek Orthodox  
Deputy Speaker of the parliament: Greek Catholic

The Cabinet is also divided equally between Christians and Muslim with fair proportional representations of sects according to their number.

- **At economic level:**

There is no discrimination against any sect, all sects have their own businesses at national level and operates freely. There is no advantage of one sect over another in laws, practices, or traditions.

- **At religious and cultural levels:**

There is utmost freedom for all sects to freely practice their faith and freely build their religious sites. The country celebrates all religious celebrations (official holidays) of all sects: for example: Lebanese celebrates two Easter vacations: one for the orthodox and one for the Catholic (and you can imagine the number of public holidays that exist in this country).

The parliament is consisted of 128 seats divided equally between Christians and Muslims with fair proportional representations of sects according to their number and of course geographical location.

**Electoral division map:**

Sunni: 27 seats  
Shi'a: 27 seats  
Druze: 8 seats  
Alawites: 2 seats  
Maronites: 34 seats  
Greek-Orthodox: 14 seats  
Greek-Catholic: 8 seats  
Gregorian (Orthodox) Armenians: 5 seats  
Catholic Armernians: 1 seat  
Protestant: 1 seat  
Minorities: 1 seat

This is a sample of the religious, sectarian and ethnic representation of parliamentary seats in one district: the Capital Beirut

Beirut is represented in 19 seats that ensure the representation of all sects based on the numerical presence in the capital. You can see based on the table the religion, sectarian and ethnic inclusion of all groups. Even non-Arab Armenians are represented.

**Recommendations:**

- 1- The power sharing model if adjusted and localized at state based level could be seen as an ideal solution for the protection and inclusion of minorities in several countries in the region.
- 2- A quota system could be a solution that governments could adapt in order to ensure the fair representation, inclusion, and protection of minorities at state bureaucratic level.
- 3- Support governments by needed expertise to ensure the proper implantation of Human Rights mechanisms and treaties on minorities.
- 4- Endorse regional forums on minorities here in Geneva that develop recommendations for the regions and from the regions.
- 5- Revise the governing system of this Forum as member states enjoy privileges in comparison to other actors and representatives of minority groups which hinder the freedom of expression as an essential rights and space for minorities to freely express themselves away from discrimination.

Thank you