

Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan

My name is Maria Salim and I'm an Indian Muslim woman. I am a member of the Bharti Muslim Mahila Andolan which is a movement of which represents the voices of over 100,000 Muslim women in India. Mr. Chairperson, Sir, Muslims comprise the largest religious minority in India at 14.23%. Despite constitutional safeguards, Indian Muslims, especially youth of the community, continue to live in poverty and backwardness.

The Sachar Committee report of 2006 only reinforced this reality. According to census figures of 2011, 42.7% Muslims having the highest percentage of illiterates, with a mere 2.75% having graduated or studied further. The percentage of Muslim children who are not in school is 19.2%. Privatization of education and the poor quality of government education have only added to this problem. The situation exacerbated because of the lack of employment opportunities with the Muslim community lagging behind with lowest employment rate in the country at 33%. The situation exacerbated because of the lack of employment opportunities with the Muslim community lagging behind with lowest employment rate in the country at 33%. All of this has contributed to Muslim youth not being able to effectively participate in the public life of the country. Hate crimes against the community, including mob lynching, either in the name of cow vigilantism or unabated hate speeches by those in position of power, and repeated instances of communal violence have only added to this marginalization.

Young Muslim women in India, like myself, are triply disadvantaged. First, as members of a minority, then as women, and then poor women. To address discrimination within families, Muslim women have been successful in achieving their first victory, that of banning the triple talat method of divorce and now working on a legislation towards codification of laws as opposed to a uniform civil code. It is to address the aforementioned issues affecting Muslim community in general and the Muslim youth in particular that we urge the state to ensure that there are equal opportunities for Muslim youth in the political, economic and educational sectors, it is the responsibility of the state to bring the perpetrators of hate crimes to justice. A special mention here of 16-year-old Junaid, who was a victim of cow vigilantism earlier this year.

It is only through the creation of an all-enabling environment where minority youth feel safe and included can human rights be truly achieved. And the vision of the founding fathers and mothers of India, that of India being a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, be truly realized. Thank you.