

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

UPR Submission

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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About ODVV

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization in Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). The ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. The ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a participatory of the NGOs Coalition for an International Court (based in New York), and national coordinator of the Global March Against Child Labour (based in New Delhi) which cooperated in a variety of issues with international organizations and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. The ODVV is also a member of the International Organization against Small and Light Weapons, and the UN Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), and the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centres in the Middle East and North Africa, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT).

4. During the last 2 decades, we have done so many activities, mainly informative with regard to human rights and supportive of the victims of violence. Various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, conferences have been held or co-held by the ODVV for various sectors of society: civil society institutions and governmental organizations. **5. Other Activities:**

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights annual sessions, and the new Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva. Written and oral statements on various items of the agenda are issued by the ODVV.

- Internship for foreign students

- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia. Publication of Defenders Newsletter (English), human rights news and developments bulletin (Farsi), Rights of the Child bulletin (Farsi)

- Daily electronic human rights newsletter in English and Farsi.

6. The present document is the individual submission of the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) for the Universal Periodic Review of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The submission focuses on Human Trafficking, Minority Rights and Islamophobia, Human Rights Violations and Crimes by UK Armed Forces in Iraq, and Violation of human rights following the UK riots. It also provides recommendations the UK should adopt in its promotion of human rights. ODVV commends the UK for supporting a majority of recommendations and welcomes its commitment to provide this Council with a progress report on the challenges identified in the present submission. ODVV notes that the challenges identified and recommendations offered are meant to serve as starting points for the interactive dialogue at next year UPR and are by no means exhaustive.

Human Trafficking in the UK

7. Human Trafficking is the fastest growing criminal activity in the world. The United Kingdom is a destination and, to a lesser extent, transit country for women, children, and men trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Some victims, including minors from the UK, are also trafficked within the country. Migrant workers are trafficked to the UK for forced labor in agriculture, construction, food processing, domestic servitude, and food service. Some official figures come from the UK Human Trafficking Centre, part of the Serious Organized Crime Agency. It says that in the two years until the end of March 2011, it received 1,481 reports of suspected trafficking. The top three nationalities of victims were Nigerian, Chinese and Vietnamese. British citizens were also in the top 10. Women made up almost three quarters of the suspected victims - and half of all the cases related to allegations of sexual exploitation. The other half all related to forced labor. Anti-Slavery International, a charity, says its best guess is that there are 5,000 people in some form of forced labor in the UK.

8. British police estimate that up to 4,000 human trafficking victims, mostly women, are being exploited in the UK at any given time. Law enforcement operations increasingly reveal a large percentage of the trafficking problem in the UK occurs hidden in residential areas throughout the country. While the government continued to provide care for adult women trafficked for sexual exploitation, not all identified trafficking victims received necessary care and protection. Conditions are that victims must be over 18; involved in prostitution within 3 months of referral; willing to cooperate in the prosecution of their traffickers; and must have been trafficked into the UK from abroad.

9. Complex international operations are moving people across continents. A family in south-east Asia could pay up to £40,000 to get a family member into Western Europe, believing that they will be able to send back riches. But that individual will often find themselves paying back a vast debt to the gang - with threats against the family back home if they do not comply.

10. While the UK government stipulates that victims are not inappropriately incarcerated, fined or penalized for unlawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked, some victims reportedly have been charged and prosecuted for immigration offences. One victim who managed to escape from her trafficker during the reporting period was repeatedly imprisoned on immigration violations, according to media sources. The UK provides foreign victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they face hardship or retribution. This process continues to be cumbersome and inconsistent for victims seeking such alternatives. By filing asylum,

humanitarian protection or extraordinary relief claims on a case-by-case basis, such victims may obtain residency.

11. In the business of slavery, there are cases of child human trafficking, within the UK, where victims have been rescued from slavery only to go missing from UK care systems. It is believed that in such cases victims are tracked down by their traffickers and rarely resurface.

12. A recently release report compiled by the NSPCC NI and Barnardos NI suggests that Northern Ireland is being used by human traffickers as a gateway to both Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The report states; "There is evidence that human traffickers are using Belfast International Airport as a port of entry to the UK and some media reports state that Northern Ireland has been identified as a key gateway for criminal gangs involved in people trafficking to the Republic of Ireland

13. ODVV welcomes the United Kingdom Government's work to tackle human trafficking. The government has signed up to international conventions against trafficking, and published its own national strategy. ODVV urges the United Kingdom to continue to address this issue. Some measures as temporary residence permits have been taken by the UK government, which are granted on the condition that the victims cooperate with law enforcement authorities. ODVV further urges the UK government to provide a report of the tangible results of the Government's action plan around violence against women and girls, and explain the type of help, legal redress and compensation that is available to them.

Minority Rights and Islamophobia

14. The term Minority Rights embodies two separate concepts: first, normal individual rights as applied to members of racial, ethnic, class, religious, linguistic or sexual minorities, and second, collective rights accorded to minority groups. The term may also apply simply to individual rights of anyone who is not part of a majority decision. The United Kingdom has had racism, from medieval times, through years of the slave trade to the modern day.

15. Recent years have witnessed incidents of hatred or irrational fear of Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia has lead to the practice of discrimination against Muslims by excluding them from the economic, social, and public life of the nation. It includes the perception that Islam has no values in common with other cultures, is inferior to the West and is a violent political ideology rather than a religion.

16. A perceived trend of Islamophobia over the last few months has been recognized by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence. Particularly, ignorance of governments to pay more attention to this form of intolerance is the ruling sentiment across nations with Muslim minorities. In the UK, the Barnabas Fund began campaigning, in August 2011, against what it said was the growing "Islamisation" of Britain.

17. When accused of terrorism, Muslims in the UK are Muslims; when killed by looters, they become Asian. Muslims in this country bravely defended shops and communities during riots in August 2011. Their example of outstanding civic duty in support of neighbors is worth highlighting- especially when sections of the UK media are so quick to print negative headlines about Muslims on the flimsiest of pretexts. According to the surveys, British people are most likely to blame the media for Islamophobia in the UK.

18. In January 2010, a report from the University of Exeter's European Muslim research centre noted that the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes has increased, ranging from "death threats and murder to persistent low-level assaults, such as spitting and name-calling," for which the media and politicians have been blamed with fueling anti-Muslim hatred. The Islamophobic incidents it described include: "Neil Lewington, a violent extremist nationalist convicted in July 2009 of a bomb plot; Terence Gavan, a violent extremist nationalist convicted in January 2010 of manufacturing nail bombs and other explosives, firearms and weapons; a gang attack in November 2009 on Muslim students at City University; the murder in September 2009 of Muslim pensioner, Ikram Syed ul-Haq; a serious assault in August 2007 on the Imam at London Central Mosque; and an arson attack in June 2009 on Greenwich Islamic Centre." Other Islamophobic incidents include "Yasir, a young Moroccan," being "nearly killed while waiting to take a bus from Willesden to Regent's Park in London" and "left in a coma for three months"; "Mohammed Kohelee," a "caretaker who suffered burns to his body while trying to prevent an arson attack against Greenwich Mosque"; "the murder" of "Tooting pensioner Ekram Haque" who "was brutally beaten to death in front of his three year old granddaughter" by a "race-hate" gang; and "police officers" being injured "during an English Defence League (EDL) march in Stoke."

19. While the focus of contemporary counter-terrorism policy remains fixed on rooting out extreme ideas, it encourages the public to treat Muslims as potential 'suspects' or legitimate objects of abuse. Internet crusaders target all Muslims, not just extremists.

UK armed forces in Iraq

20. Reports show that an estimated 30,000 detainees are held without trial in Iraq, many of whom are instances of enforced disappearance. Thousands of these detainees continue to be detained despite judicial orders issued for their release. There are also reports illustrating the UK involvement in the mistreatment of detainees held abroad.

21. What happened to Baha Mousa and the other detainees at the hands of British soldiers was a clear instance of human rights crimes by the UK armed forces in Iraq. Senior officers should have been aware of the abuse Mousa was enduring. Mousa and his fellow detainees endured repeated beatings and hooding. Hooding is one of the "five techniques" that the British government said 40 years ago it would never use again and is prohibited by the Geneva conventions. There has been gross failure of the senior officers, who allowed the ill-treatment of the men to continue, as well as the "corporate" and "systemic failure" of the Ministry of Defence to provide clear and consistent guidelines about the proper treatment of detainees. The killing of Baha Mousa illustrates some key problems with military detention, among which is the general lawlessness around detention by the British army. By denying that international human rights law applied to the British army, the then government authorised British forces to detain Iraqis when they wanted, for almost any reason, and for as long as they wanted. The government denied there was any requirement to bring all detainees in British custody before a judge, a critical step to ensure the legality of detention and avoid abuse.

22. The need for full and public disclosure of the truth about human rights violations and the duty of states to hold those responsible to account remains essential and must not be swept aside. The UK torture inquiry should not be secretive and flawed. Reports, however, say that the government does not intend to provide transparency and the inquiry is supposed to be highly

secretive, with much of the proceedings held behind closed doors and any new disclosures requiring the government's approval.

23. Media reports said the government decided to make the payments in order to avoid possible disclosures about the activities of the intelligence services in court cases involving by former detainees. To date the rights to access to justice for these former detainees have been obstructed by persistent efforts on the part of the UK government to prevent disclosure of evidence relevant to these allegations.

Violation of human rights following the UK riots

24. Following the riots over the recent months, which resulted in the spreading of the unrest to other parts of the capital, and other British cities, the behaviour of the British Government, particularly the violent treatment of the detainees, mass arrests, and the handing down of heavy sentences to the criminals in the riots, violation of fair trial standards, blatant violation of freedom of expression and information, and inattention to poverty and social-economic discriminations as the root cause of these protests are all clear cases of blatant and grave violations of human rights in the country.

Recommendations

25. ODVV calls on the UK to ensure that effective measures are in place to allow for quick and accurate identification of trafficked victims, drawing attention to incidents where victims have been identified as irregular migrants. In such cases, victims are often deported and therefore unable to seek redress. When a safe return to the country of origin was not guaranteed victims must be offered temporary or permanent residence permits.

26. ODVV urges the UK government to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to enable quick and accurate identification of trafficked persons to prevent any misidentification of trafficked persons as irregular migrants, which often leads to detention and deportation, effectively precluding a chance to seek compensation.

27. United Kingdom should ensure that trafficked persons are equipped with access to information, free legal aid and other necessary assistance such as interpretation services, and regular residence status during the duration of any legal proceedings.

28. It is feared that the London 2012 Games could become a magnet for prostitutes trafficked from Eastern Europe by criminal gangs. ODVV believes that these issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, and that working with other countries to combat human trafficking will be key to help respond quickly and appropriately to any potential increased risk of trafficking.

29. ODVV calls for the UK Government to introduce general anti-discrimination laws. Future policies must ensure they do not undermine the trust Muslim communities have in state institutions nor their sense of belonging in Britain.

30. ODVV calls all people of faith to “challenge Islamophobia”. People from all sections of the societies have a crucial role to play in helping to dispel myths about Muslim communities. There

is a common misconception that Islam is a religion of Violence. There is no basis for this in Islam. Islam is a religion of peace. Accordingly, ODVV invites nations to improve understanding among all Abrahamic faiths and cultures and avoid incitement to hatred and violence, in order to reach a world of peace and security.

31. Recommendations on human rights violations and by UK armed forces in Iraq

32. UK authorities must deliver justice over abuse cases in Iraq; payment is only a part of the remedy to the victims.

33. UK must comply with Geneva Conventions on torture.

34. An inquiry into allegations of human rights crimes and the respective legal proceedings should be accompanied with sufficient transparency.

35. The United Kingdom should urgently ensure a full, transparent and credible accounting of the circumstances in these and other cases.

36. We urge the United Kingdom to continue to remain committed to its national, regional and international commitments: i.e. not to abolish the Human Rights Act, nor withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights.

37. We urge the British Government to investigate the behaviour of the police in the recent riots in the country, and take steps to ensure this kind of behaviour is not repeated.

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