

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

UPR Submission

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سازمان دفاع از قربانیان خشونت
Organization for Defending Victims
of Violence

www.odvv.org

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. As a nongovernmental organization active in human rights, the ODVV has collected documents and data, through published information in news websites, and is and is providing the following report on the human rights situation of France, with the aim of the improvement of the human rights situation.

Violation of Freedom

7. Freedom is one of the central principles of human rights which has been stressed in several human rights universal documents. And also according to Article 2 of the French Constitution (1958) France is a secular country, but at the same time all religions are equally respected. (Addendum 1)

8. But the realities of the recent years show:

a) In the French society individuals such as French writer and researcher Roger Garaudy who was put on trial for only expressing his beliefs in a history book on international

Zionism and Holocaust denial, and to-date a number of other European countries have criminalized the denial of the Holocaust.

b) With an approximate population of 7 million Muslims, France is one the European countries that due a historical background with 10 percent having the largest Muslim population in Europe. But on the pretext of defending its secular values, France deprives Muslims their personal and social freedoms, and by banning the wearing of religious insignia and clothes from state run schools and universities, Muslim girls are forced to stay away and their education be denied. French Muslims show solidarity towards Algerian and Palestinian movements, and the French government cracks down on any form of solidarity through political pressure, propaganda and even imprisonment.

Racial and Religious Discrimination

9. Another important human rights principle is to fight any form of discrimination among humans. (Addendum 2)

Racial Discrimination

a) According to political analysts, racial discrimination towards people of African descent has a long history in France and this approach which visible in the terrible economic, social and political situation of his community within the French society has roots in the past French colonial era in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Indochina and a number of Caribbean islands, all of which were French Colonies. From socio-psychological perspective the colonial rule on Third World countries resulted in the degrading look at nations under their rule, and racial discrimination is the vile manifestation of such view. On this basis despite the end of the colonial era, there is still this arrogant attitude towards Third World and developing nations exist, and this has caused Muslims, Arabs and African migrants to be subjected to the worst forms of racial discrimination, and be deprived of their personal and social rights.

b) Racial discrimination against African descent French citizens especially in the provision of health, medical, employment and education services is fully visible. A general comparison of the income levels of whites and blacks shows that there are racists who see their fellow black country men and women as slaves. The deprived blacks on the outskirts of Paris who for decades have been trying to improve their income situation, unfortunately face countless number of obstacles in trying to find work and accommodation. A thematic study shows that out of 100 job applications from white people are met with 75 interviews, while individuals with Arabic and Islamic sounding names only get 14 interviews. Increasingly youths living on the suburbs of big cities lose more hope, unemployment and poverty are on the increase,

c) The mistreatment of French citizens of Africa or Middle East origins is one of the biggest problems of the society of this country. Amnesty International's 2004 report states that police brutality towards religious and ethnic minorities in the country had increased 20 times compared to the previous year. Also it must be said that discriminatory actions are taken against the poorer sections of the French society. Even educated individuals with university qualifications cannot find work because of their name and or religion, or Arab and or African origins individuals are continually searched in the Metro. The 2005 civil unrest in France of October and November (in French *Les émeutes des banlieues de 2005*) was a series of riots by mostly French youths of African and Maghrebian origins in the suburbs of Paris and other French cities, involving mainly

the burning of cars and public buildings at night starting on 27 October 2005 in Clichy-sous-Bois. Events spread to poor housing projects (the cités HLM) in various parts of France. These riots were not similar to the late Rodney King's incident, but they were as a result of deep rooted discriminations, and the beating of coloured protesters in front of the cameras on the streets was a great catalyst for these discriminations.

10. The ODVV believes that the implementation of specific programmes for the provision of fundamental freedoms and political, social and economic rights in all sectors of society can have great influence in the promotion of human rights.

Religious Discrimination

11. France has a population of almost 70 million. Muslims make up ten percent of the population, and Islam is the second largest religion after Catholicism, but nonetheless they do not have any representatives in the Parliament or the main power echelons of the country.

12. Extensive propaganda campaigns are done against the Muslims of the country through which they are humiliated and insulted, and the severest of restrictions are imposed on them. The dangers of Islamism is campaigned by the media, Islamic publications are banned, Islamic laws regarding the hijab are banned, Muslims are all deemed as extremists, racist attacks against Muslims are on a rise, and through all of these things a vast programmed discrimination against Muslims is ongoing.

13. The ODVV believes that the removal of the hijab ban from schools, through amendment of the related law has always been the slogan of freedom for the French community, and is a rightful expectation from the country.

14. The French police disrespect mosques in the country and throw tear gas inside them, whereas if something similar were to happen to a church or a mosque, the Interior Minister would immediately go to the location and directly apologise to those religious communities, but remain silent towards the same thing happening to Islamic religious centres. This is all while Muslims have never objected to secularism, and even thousands of Muslim girls and women donned French flags as headscarves and protested on the streets, and in practice they showed that as French people they wanted religious customs and traditions to be free.

15. The ODVV sees efforts towards the better applications of anti-discrimination laws, particularly in the case of minority groups, is a first step towards the realisation of human rights in France, and believes that the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination with regards to putting a stop to recruiting racists within the police force and public services is very necessary.

16. Also the confrontation with racial and religious hatred requires the implementation of cultural programmes, and ratification of enforceable laws in this regard.

17. The deportation of Romanian refugees from France which is in violation of EU signed agreements, and France is obliged to observe them, and deprivation and poverty in migrant towns on the outskirts of the capital and the failure to observe the basic human rights of the dwellers who are mostly French citizens, are all other cases of concern.

18. The ODVV believes special attention must be paid to the human rights of migrants, and the implementation of their guaranteed human rights must be put in the French government's programmes, and attention must be made towards the increase of violence

among migrants in public places and also the police and justice systems, and efforts for their improvements be made.

19. The failure to observe human rights in prisons and putting prisoners under pressure is another instance where violations are visible. According to French official figures on average one inmate commits suicide every three days. The reducing of the judicial proceedings times in the condition of prisoners, and improvement of their conditions in line with international standards are instances that require serious attention.

20. While commending the French Government for its efforts to promote human rights, and acceptance of recommendations in the first round of the UPR, the ODVV calls upon more determination by the country in fulfilling all the recommendations in the UPR.

Addendum 1

20. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights States:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Addendum 2

21. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

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