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“Child Foundation”

Submission to the UN Human Rights Council on Universal periodical review of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Executive summary

1. This report focuses on the situation of children who both need and are deprived of proper education in Iran. According to studies it has so far carried out, our organization has reached the conclusion that although the Islamic Republic of Iran has made all-out efforts to eliminate poverty in the society during past years, especially after 2010, and has done its best to comply with its commitments in line with the Millennium Development Goals, the financial and educational poverty among Iranian children is a deep-rooted problem which needs more attention. This report has touched on the widespread participation of nongovernmental and charity organizations in efforts made to eliminate deprivation among students and their families. It has also elaborated on measures so far taken to promote education and help with the sociability of these children. In conclusion, proposals have been offered on how Iran can solve this problem and answers have been given to recommendations that were offered in the first round of Iran's Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Some of these proposals include:

2. Requesting Iranian Ministry of Education to cooperate with charities active in the field of education in order to provide better coverage for children, especially needy children introduced by those charities;
3. Urging the government to provide nongovernmental charities with more facilities to use its capacities in the field of national and urban publicity in order to build suitable culture for the education of poor children, orphans, children with bad parents and working children;
4. To create an institution for more coordination among the existing state institutions and nongovernmental organizations in order to make the most of the inadequate existing resources;
5. Training governmental forces and the public opinion in order to enable them to better understand the “necessity for all children to be educated;”
6. Requesting the government of Iran to give more room to the activities of nongovernmental organizations that specialize in this issue;
7. Urging other governments to share their international experiences with regard to this issue;
8. Encouraging an all-out effort by all members of the Human Rights Council to remove all kinds of sanctions against Iran, especially sanctions against banks which have actually made it impossible for nongovernmental Iranian charities, to conduct financial transactions with their supporters and members in other countries;
9. Offering proposals to the UN and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to get more actively engaged in the activities of Iranian nongovernmental

organizations and to provide them with technical support in order to empower them more than before;

10. Asking member states of the Human Rights Council to pay balanced attention to all three generations of human rights when discussing the situation of human rights in a country like Iran, so that, all people, especially children will be offered with a suitable opportunity to avail themselves of civil, and economic rights as well as the right to development.

Keywords: child, right to development, right to education, sanctions

Introducing the Foundation

11. Child Foundation, which has been registered in Iran under the name of “Child Well-being Charity Institute,” started its activities in 1995 and has had Special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2005. The foundation’s office in Iran opened simultaneous with its office in Portland city of the US State of Oregon under the name of Child Foundation. Child Foundation in Iran, which serves as a nongovernmental, nonprofit, non-political and popular institute, has stated its main goal as such: “No Iranian talented student should be deprived of education on ground of poverty.” At present, more than 9,000 needy students – about 60 percent of whom are girls – are covered by this foundation.
12. The Iranian Child Foundation has opened active offices in most Iranian cities during the past 20 years and is currently providing services in all Iranian provinces. It is also running active international offices in the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Germany, and the UK.
13. Attaching due importance to education and training is the main policy of Child Foundation. This institute aims to respect human dignity of students, while preventing them from becoming “dependent persons,” by encouraging their participation in building a future with bright prospects. This organization runs one of the most extensive (educational and financial) support networks for children across Iran.
14. Child Foundation has also obtained global standard of nongovernmental organizations (known as SGS certificate) from the Swiss SGS (Société Générale de Surveillance) company.

Basic recommendations

15. This report is based on the follow-up of the following recommendations made during the first Iran UPR session in 2010 by countries whose names have been given in parentheses:

- Continue to implement measures aimed at further promoting and protecting children's rights and intensify efforts to ensure further opportunities for access to higher education (Qatar), and
- Continue to make progress in education and health care, with a particular focus on women and girl children (Bangladesh).

Situation of recommendation in past, present, and desirable future

16. Although education for children has been compulsory in Iran since 1945, due to importance of the family institution as well as the strong emphasis put by Islam and the ancient Iranian culture on helping the poor, the issue of children and the necessity of seeing to their education and livelihood have been held very important in Iran since many centuries ago. However, problems like the natural ups and down in development, the Iraqi impose war on Iran (1980-1988), the US sanctions during the past three decades and their further escalation in the past six years, in addition to mismanagement, have caused the number of children needing education and better livelihood to greatly increase in the past years. In view of such factors as burgeoning of population and average annual income in Iran, our organization believes that the optimal point is that at the end of the "Iran's Fifth Economic Development Plan", education of talented, but needy children, come under precise control and supervision of government and nongovernmental institutions.

Method used to collect information

17. To present a clear picture of the situation of talented, but needy children, the nongovernmental Child Foundation has opted for an efficient method which is based on the findings of its exclusive field studies and also draws on legal supervisory tools such as the media supervision to monitor the measures that have been taken in this regard.

Advances

During the past four years, the following grounds have been broken with regard to the issue of children in Iran:

18. Iran's accession to Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (approved by the United Nations General Assembly on May 25, 2000). By doing so, the Islamic Republic of

Iran has taken an important step toward committing to improvement of children's rights.

19. Increased efforts by legislative institutions in Iran to provide children with suitable security. To achieve this goal, for example, the single article of the law passed to amend Article 1169 of the Civil Code has specified that when parents are separated in divorce, the mother will have custody of the child up to the age of seven after which the custody will be transferred to father. A note to this law, however, says, even after the age of seven, in case of disagreement between the parents, the custody of child will be determined by court according to the best interest of the child. In fact, when a parent has a problem such as lack of qualification of keep the child or other parent objects to the way that the child is being taken care of, it is possible to change the situation of child custody even during the period which the law has given priority to father or mother.
20. Qualitative and quantitative boost in national educational programs aimed at educational and livelihood empowerment of children in addition to publicity for this goal through national media, have been among effective steps taken by the government to increase attention in the society to the situation of needy children.
21. During the past few years, as the number of nongovernmental organizations working for children has increased and they have become more focused on the education of government forces and people, a much more favorable atmosphere of social understanding about the "necessity of educating children" has taken shape compared to the past. The amount of participation and contributions by benevolent people in this field has been also eye-catching during the aforesaid period.

Challenges and problem

Despite the aforementioned advances, especially in promoting public awareness of this issue, there are still problems and challenges the most important of which include:

22. **Legal challenge:** The volume and quality of laws supporting education and well-being of children are not proportionate to realities in the society.
23. **Executive challenge:** Some institutions in charge of children's affairs, such as the Ministry of Education, lack the ability to introduce needy children to charity bodies that are specialized in the attraction of popular contributions for such children.
24. **The government** has traditionally considered nongovernmental organizations of low importance or even as rival entities and, as a result, many state sectors do not appropriately cooperate with nongovernmental organizations for the realization of their goals.
25. The impact of sanctions imposed on Iran on ground of the country's nuclear energy program, has overshadowed all executive activities of the government and has caused the budget allocated to children's affairs to shrink in the past few years. This issue has

had a very negative effect on the quality of services provided to children by relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Education and State Welfare Organization of Iran.

26. Sanctions, especially heavy restrictions on financial transactions, have been the biggest hurdle on the way of transferring funds collected by people outside Iran to be sent to nongovernmental organizations inside the country. In fact, also it has been announced recently that the United States is taking steps to alleviate sanctions, the existing negative atmosphere has prevented global banks and financial institutions from undertaking any kind of transactions with Iran. Even when they undertake such transactions, they do it through unordinary or even irrational cautionary measures. The final result of these problems is more pressure on children that actually need such financial contributions.

Recommendations

In order to solve the aforesaid problems and for Iran to take more effective measures in line with the recommendations that it has accepted during the first UPR session, Child Foundation offers the following proposals:

27. Requesting Iranian Ministry of Education to work with charity institutes relevant to education of children in order to provide more extensive and better services to children and students, especially for the introduction of needy students to such charity institutes to receive aid;
28. Provision of more facilities by the government to nongovernmental charity institutes to enable them to take more advantage of government's capacities for publicity at national and urban levels aimed at building suitable culture to improve education of poor children, orphans, children with bad parents, and working children;
29. Establishment of an institution for more coordination between concerned governmental institutions and nongovernmental organizations with the purpose of making the most of the existing inadequate resources;
30. Training governmental forces and the public opinion for better understanding of the "need for all children to be educated;"
31. Requesting the Iranian government to give more latitude to nongovernmental organizations that are specialized in this field;
32. Requesting other governments faced with this problem to share international experiences in this regard;
33. Making all-out efforts by member states of the UN Human Rights Council to push for the removal of all sanctions against Iran, especially sanctions against banks, which have made it almost impossible for Iranian nongovernmental charities to engage in financial transactions with their supporters or members in other countries;

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34. Urging the UN and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to become more actively engaged in the activities of Iranian nongovernmental organizations and provide technical assistance in order to further empower them;
35. Providing good grounds for Iranian nongovernmental organizations to make optimal use of experiences of international organizations as well as nongovernmental organizations active in this field in other parts of the world;
36. To increase the volume of state budget allocated to these goals and also to increase share of Iranian nongovernmental organizations from programs and the budget allocated by the UN to this purpose;
37. Asking member states of the Human Rights Council and also its monitoring mechanisms to pay balanced attention to all three generations of human rights when reviewing the situation of human rights in a country like Iran, so that, all people, especially children, will be provided with necessary opportunities to avail themselves of civil and economic rights as well as the right to development.