

November 1, 2019

The Kurdistan Region has taken great steps in building an equal and non-violent society” stated the KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy throughout his participation in CEDAW Committee meeting in Geneva, United Nations Headquarter

On 21/10/2019, the 74th session of the Special Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) took place at the Office of United Nation’s Human Rights Council in Geneva, in the presence of experts and representatives of the countries that have ratified the Convention and civil society organizations concerned with women's affairs to discuss the seventh periodic report of Iraq with the presence of a delegation from the Kurdistan Region.

In this regard Dr. Dindar Zebari, the Coordinator for International Advocacy in the KRG highlighted the progress made in the region including the domestic violence Law No. (8) for the year (2011) and the amendment of many other laws related to women, the discussions also covered the representation of women in the political field including the Presidency of the Parliament which is headed by a woman, in addition to the second deputy speaker of the parliament who is also a woman.

The strong presence of females can be seen in the new cabinet of the Regional Government where women have taken three ministerial positions. This is in addition to the presence of (30) female judges, (56) prosecutors, (31) governors of appeal, (94) judicial investigators, (289) assistant investigators, and lots of civil society organizations concerned with women's affairs.

The Coordinator for International Advocacy also added, “In the health sector, we mentioned the maternal and child health strategy adopted by the Kurdistan Regional Government which involved providing free services for pregnant women through (238) health centres, (7) hospitals for children and maternity, (20) health units and (3) specialized centres for the early detection of breast cancer in the region, In addition, there are 16 pre-marital awareness centres and pre-marital tests, such as hepatitis, thalassemia, tuberculosis, anaemia and AIDS tests”.

Regarding women's participation in the field of media and police department, the Coordinator for International Advocacy said, “A committee was formed to defend the rights of female journalists. There are now (1500) female journalists in the region between a working member and an associate member of the Journalists Syndicate, in addition to (13) franchisee and (17) editors-in-chief. In the police and internal security forces there are (882) women within the staff of the Ministry of Interior with different positions. As for the departments of the ministry, the number of females is (2522) in addition to thousands of women in the Peshmerga forces”.

The Coordinator for International Advocacy talked about the role of women in education and the higher education aspect and said, "In order to build a well-educated society, the government of the region has undertaken several steps, including the project of combating illiteracy where the percentage of beneficiaries reached (55.4%). Furthermore, the number of beneficiaries from the accelerated education for the academic year (2015-2016) reached (2506) students.

The number of kindergartens in the region is (517), where hundreds of thousands of girls are enrolled in these kindergartens. The KRG continues to implement the Non-Discrimination Act in identifying school principals. The percentage of females in the school stages was as follows: kindergarten (50%), elementary school (47%), junior high (51%), vocational (36%), institutes (31%) and accelerated education (29%). On the other hand, the number of female students and teachers was as follows: (922,648) students which means (51.72%) of the total number of students and (73,769) female teachers, meaning (57.70%) of the total number of teachers.

As for higher education, there are 14 public universities and lots of private universities in the Kurdistan Region. The percentage of female students is equal to that of the male students. The majority of the heads of departments and dean of universities are women. There are (10) female deans, (73) heads of departments, (2972) university professors, (68099) students and (7714) employees in the academic year of (2016-2017). The Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, in coordination with the High Council for Women's Affairs, opened gender studies centers at universities in the region to prepare gender studies and identify discriminatory gaps against women and work to achieve equality through teaching first year college students the gender concepts with the start of the academic year (2019-2020).

Regarding the role of the Kurdistan Regional Government in assisting and liberating the kidnapped Yezidi females, the Coordinator for International Advocacy stated, "The liberation of the Yezidi females was of the important topics that we highlighted during the Geneva meetings and the steps undertaken by the regional government, especially the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Region No. (5170) on 21/8/2014 to form a High Committee to classify the crimes committed by ISIS terrorist group against the Yezidis as a crime of genocide. Over the past years, the Committee has been internationalizing the case and attempting to make this case being adopted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Judicial Council in the region, in coordination with the Council of Ministers on 7/9/2014, under article (31) of the Judicial Authority Law No. (23) For the year 2007, decided to form a judicial body to investigate the victims of Sinjar and the other areas to document these crimes.

The Coordinator for International Advocacy in the Regional Government added that the Special Office of the Prime Minister in Kurdistan Region formed a special committee to collect information and follow-up the file of the abductees on 25/11/2014, a budget was also allocated for their release. The Ministry of Interior has also established field mobile teams in all camps to report crimes of sexual violence or harassment if committed against women and girls. According to the statistics of the Yezidi kidnappers' rescue office, from their approved

sources as of 20/7/2019, the numbers were as follows: The number of kidnapped (6417), including: females (3548), males (2869).

Total number of survivors: 3487. Women (1186), men (377), female children: (1024) male children: (940). The rest (2930) females (1338) males (1592) and (100) survivors were sent to Germany for psychological treatment based on an agreement between the regional government and the German government. As for the health services provided to displaced women and refugees, the Coordinator for International Advocacy in the Kurdistan Regional Government said, “ A health unit was provided in each camp in addition to health units that provide reproductive health services and address cases of violence, the presence of 60% of trained staff members to receive survivors, and the presence of volunteers In the camps to raise awareness about health services, violence and counselling survivors, ambulances have been provided in each camp for emergency cases. Conducting vaccination campaigns for children and providing other services for the care of pregnant women and new-born children.

At the end of his speech Dr. Dindar Zebari, the Coordinator for International Advocacy in the Regional Government said, “a hot line was opened on 3/3/2016 with the number (119) to help reduce violence against women with the help of (UNFPA) ,which is open 24 hours and (36) people were trained on how to work on it. (4) Shelters have been opened by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for threatened women in (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Dohuk and Kalar).

In addition to the citizens of the region, these shelters also receive displaced women and refugees, as well as foreign women living in the region, especially women with disabilities and special needs, without any discrimination in terms of nationality, religion or language. There are now many displaced women and refugees in the shelters, the numbers are as follows: Sulaymaniyah (17) displaced women, Erbil (10) displaced women and (18) refugees of different nationalities, Duhok (15) displaced women; the cases of (14) of these women have been resolved only one female has remained in the shelter.