

## **International Women's Day: An Annual Commiseration of the Failure of the Secular Democratic Liberal System to Solve the Problems of Women**

### **News:**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March, women took to the streets of cities across the world, including the Muslim lands, to mark International Women's Day (IWD), demanding an end to violence against women and an end to gender inequalities. IWD was first celebrated more than a century ago, in 1911, and was officially recognized by the United Nations in 1977. The day was inspired by the struggle of thousands of suffragists who campaigned for more rights for women, including the right to vote and to have control over their own money and property.

### **Comment:**

However, what is International Women's Day except an annual reminder of the fact that women had to fight the secular democratic liberal systems in their states to secure basic rights of citizenship such as the same political, economic and educational rights as men, and protection from violence – it wasn't provided for them by default. Indeed, under these systems, women were viewed as spiritually, intellectually and rationally inferior to men. Even Western thinkers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and Montesquieu, who were key figures in the western 'Enlightenment' which advocated the separation of church and state – the foundation of secularism, described women as incapable by their nature to develop the full faculty of reasoning, depicting them as creatures of emotion and therefore unsuitable for the public sphere.

What is International Women's Day except an annual reminder of the fact that the secular liberal democratic system, and indeed all man-made systems, continue to fail abysmally to protect women from violence, abject poverty, economic and sexual exploitation, and all other forms of oppression and injustice. Today, in countries where the suffragette movement and feminist organisations arose – gender-based violence, extreme poverty, the objectification and sexualization of women, and sexual and economic trafficking of women are rampant. In America, 81% of women have experienced sexual harassment or assault in their lifetime (National Sexual Violence Resource Center), and nearly 3 U.S women are killed every day by intimate partners (NBC News). One in three women in the European Union have experienced violence in adulthood – equivalent to around 50 million women (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights). Moreover, in the UK, an investigation by UN Women UK found that 97% of women aged 18-24 have been sexually harassed; and around 2 women are killed each week in England and Wales by a current or former partner (Office of National Statistics). Furthermore, more than 30% of families in America headed by single women with children were poor (National Women's Law Centre), while according to the European Parliament, the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU for women was around 23% - a higher level than for men.

And what is International Women's Day except an annual reminder that women's rights, dignity and protections are selectively applied and championed by feminist organizations and secular democratic liberal governments based upon their political agendas and interests. It is clear that all women's rights agreements and conventions against gender-based violence are null and void when it comes to the protection and

rights of Muslim women in Palestine, Myanmar, Yemen, Kashmir and elsewhere who are killed, raped, starved, thrown out of their homes, treated like second class citizens, and deprived of access to education and healthcare by their occupiers and oppressive regimes – while such secular governments, UN women's organisations, and feminist groups fail to lift a finger to stop their suffering.

Indeed, International Women's Day should be a stark reminder that the secular democratic liberal system holds no clear solution to the problems that women face – in fact, it is the primary source of their oppression – having created environments with their liberal values, such as sexual freedoms, that are ripe for violence and exploitation of women. This is alongside implementing a capitalist economic system that has created mass wealth inequality and poverty for women, and views women as nothing but tools of production to increase the revenue of businesses and states – forcing them to compromise their vital role as wives and mothers in order to enter the workforce to provide for themselves and their families.

Therefore, International Women's Day should not be a day for celebration but a day for reflection of the need for an alternative system to protect women and their rights. And as Muslims, why would we want to look for solutions elsewhere for the multitude of problems afflicting women in the Muslim lands, when Allah (swt), the Creator of the universe has laid down a complete blueprint for how to successfully solve these issues, and prescribed a system that led the world in ensuring respect, good treatment, protection from violence and exploitation, and the guarantee of political, educational and economic rights for women. This system is the Khilafah based upon the method of the Prophethood which rules by Islam, for it is Islam that stated to the world that women have the same spiritual, intellectual and rational status as men, and obligated men to view and treat them with dignity, according to the hadith of the Prophet (saw): «أكرموا النساء، فو الله ما «**Be honorable towards women, as by Allah only a honorable man would treat woman with honor and none but a mean man would humiliate them.**»

And it is Islam that gave women the right to elect their ruler and to hold him to account; and that led the world in inheritance rights for women and gave them full control over their wealth and property. It is Islam that forbade any form of violence against women and granted them the right to seek divorce in an unhappy marriage. In addition, it is Islam that encouraged women to study and created thousands of female scholars, and it is Islam which truly values the vital role of women as wives and mothers, lifting from them the burden of financially providing for themselves by placing this as an obligation on their male relatives or the state.

So, as Muslim women, we don't need International Women's Day. What we need is the establishment of the System of Allah (swt), the Khilafah, in our Muslim lands which will return the Almighty-given rights afforded to women and ensure for them dignity, protection, prosperity and security, and stand as a model to the world of the good treatment of women.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by**

**Asma Siddiq**

**Member of the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir**