Women and Children in Islam.. Dignity to Be Protected and Rights to Be Upheld



Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds; and blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Mohamed (PBUH), and upon his kinship, and all his companions and followers till the Day of Judgment.

Brothers and sisters,

Around the world, days are set aside for issues that deserve public attention. They include World Children's Day (WCD) on 20 November and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (IDEVAW) on 25 November. Islam has made clear the standing of women and children and established rights for them that are put into practice through kindness, care, and protection from harm. Allah Almighty says in Surat Al Nahl: ﴿And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims.﴾ (Al Nahl: 89).

Women's Rights in Islam

A woman has inherent human dignity, bears religious obligations, and has the legal capacity to act in her own right. She has rights within the family and in society. Our Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Women are indeed the counterparts of men." Among her rights in married life are those Allah Almighty sets out in these words – in Surat Al Baqarah: ﴿...And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable;...﴾ (Al Baqarah: 228). Islam honors women in all their roles. As a mother, she has the strongest claim to kind companionship. When a man asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) who most deserved his good companionship, he answered, "Your mother, then your mother, then your mother, then your father." (Abu Hurairah ¯May Allah be pleased with him¯ reported: A person came to Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and asked, "Who among people is most deserving of my fine treatment?" He (PBUH) said, "Your mother". He again asked, "Who next?" "Your mother", the Prophet (PBUH) replied again. He asked, "Who next?" The Prophet (PBUH)) said again, "Your mother." He again asked, "Then who?" Thereupon he (PBUH) said," Then your father.") –

Agreed upon by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim. As a daughter, she is to be treated kindly and brought up with care, as the Prophet urged. Concerning wives, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The best of you is the best to his wives, and I am the best of you to my vives". Islam entitles a woman to a marriage gift (mahr) and requires that her consent to marriage be sought. It makes tranquility and affection reciprocal rights of the spouses; Allah Amighty says in Surat Al Baqarah: ﴿...They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them... ﴾ (Al Baqarah: 187).

Islam safeguards a woman's financial autonomy. Her property may be taken only with her willing consent, and she is entitled to a prescribed share of inheritance. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "O Allah, I declare inviolable the rights of two weak ones: the orphans and women". [That is, I sternly forbid people to disregard their rights, impress upon them the seriousness of doing so, and warn them against wronging either of them.]

From the earliest days of Islam, women took part in scholarship and work. Khadijah, may Allah be pleased with her, was the first person to believe in the Message of Islam. Muslim women have been scholars, teachers, women who strove in Allah's cause, and women known for their wisdom.

In Islam, the family nurtures values and is the first place where people learn mercy and kindness. Allah Amighty says in Surat Al Rum: ﴿ And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy... ﴾ (Al Rum: 21). The home is where the heart finds rest after the hardships of the road, and the family is the first building block of society. Islam established marriage as a solemn covenant founded on mutual consent. It enjoined spouses to treat each other with kindness and fairness, forbade harm and betrayal, and provided for wise reconciliation when disagreements arise. Allah Amighty says in Surat Al Nisa: ﴿And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them – and settlement is best. And present in [human] souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear Allah – then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.. ﴾ (Al Nisa: 128).

Children's Rights in Islam

Every child has the right to have their life and lineage (nasab) protected and to have someone who cares for them and meets their needs. Islamic law sets out rules for breastfeeding, financial maintenance (nafaqah), custody (hadanah), and taking a child into one's care (kafalah). Those entrusted with a child's care are accountable for it. Allah Amighty says in Surat Al Baqarah: ﴿...Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable... ﴾ (Al Baqarah: 233). And He Almighty says in Surat Al Isra: ﴿... And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin. ﴾ (Al Isra: 31).

Our Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) urged us to treat children with kindness. He said, "Anyone who does not show mercy to our children nor acknowledge the right of our old people is not one of us." He also taught that caring for an orphan is among the greatest acts by which one draws near to Allah. He said, "I will be like this – raising his forefinger and middle finger by way of illustration – in Paradise with the person who takes care of an orphan".

Our understanding of these rights is grounded in Islam. When we consider international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), we assess their provisions and underlying concepts in light of that framework. Consider what this convention calls for, in our reading. It seeks to make men and women entirely alike, to nullify religious rulings that distinguish between the sexes, to change social and cultural patterns of behavior among men and women, and to establish equality between them. [This includes abolishing polygyny, abolishing the Islamic waiting period (iddah) for women after divorce or a husband's death, abolishing the principle of guardianship (wilayah) for women in marriage, and abolishing the principle of reciprocal obligations arising from the marriage contract.] These are among the measures it calls for.

CEDAW is, in our view, a purely Western imposition, far removed from the very meaning of a convention. Its

primary aim is to weaken family cohesion. It is part of a process of cultural globalization that seeks to compel all nations to adopt the Western model of society, the family, and relations between men and women.

We believe that implementing provisions of such conventions that conflict with Islamic rulings on family matters upsets the balance Islam establishes between spouses' rights and duties, weakens the cohesion of the Muslim family, and diverts it from the purpose Allah intended for it. This harms the family and society and turns people away from the innate disposition (fitrah) with which Allah created them.

To the Women and Children of Gaza

I address these words to my Palestinian sister in Gaza: My dear sister, you who stand with dignity, who have lost your home, your husband, or some of your children, and you who hold your children close amid tents and rubble, your suffering is seen and hearts break for you. Your steadfastness will never go unrewarded by Allah. Since October 2023, mothers have lost their children, women who once shared their bread with their husbands have been widowed, and children who had yet to know what safety meant have been orphaned. Coming to the aid of the oppressed is a trust laid upon this Ummah. We ask Allah to grant you abundant patience and to strengthen your hearts. Allah Amighty says in Surat Al Zumar: ﴿... Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account. ﴾ (Al Zumar: 10).

I call upon the peoples of our Arab nation to consider what the children of Gaza are enduring. Do not let the passing of time erase their memory or the repetition of news about them obscure the severity of what they are living through. Some have lost their lives. Some have lost a father or a mother. Others bear wounds that have left lasting marks on their bodies and minds. Every one of these children has the right to sleep safely at home, to learn, and to receive the care they need. In condemning the practice of burying girls alive, Allah Amighty says in Surat Al Takwir: ﴿And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked. For what sin she was killed. ﴾ (Al Takwir: 8–9). How, then, can we overlook the children who have been killed and those who face hunger, thirst, and fear?

The Muslim Brotherhood calls on Arab governments to shoulder their responsibilities in protecting civilians in Gaza and to work to open the crossings, deliver food and medicine, provide treatment for the injured, and provide shelter for those displaced. It calls on the Arab peoples to offer whatever help they can and to bring the voices of Gaza's women and children to the attention of the world and the humanitarian organizations concerned.

To Women Detained in Egyptian Prisons

To you, my sister behind the walls of Egypt's prisons, enduring injustice with patience, I know how long the night has been, and I feel the weight of the days you endure. You are not alone. The cause of detained men and women is among the Muslim Brotherhood's highest priorities. In cooperation with national forces, it works to raise awareness of your cause, make your voices heard, monitor and document violations against you, and report them to the relevant human rights bodies in Egypt and around the world.

We never cease to pray for you, my sister, as you endure patiently and seek your reward from Allah. May Allah relieve your distress and return you to your family and children safe, with your dignity intact and your honor upheld.

In closing, I pray to Allah Almighty to protect women and children, to have mercy on the martyrs, to heal the wounded, to comfort the bereaved and the orphans, and to fill our homes with tranquility, affection, and mercy.

Allah is the Greatest, and praise be to Allah,

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