

## **COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES**

### **Statement to the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

We are a coalition of more than fifty NGOs and academics from fifteen countries in the Middle East, North Africa and South and South Asia who have come together to promote and defend sexual, bodily and reproductive rights as human rights since 2001. We welcome the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women as a great opportunity to accelerate efforts for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against girls.

We call on all states to use this opportunity to commit to taking all measures to prevent, criminalize, prosecute and punish cases of all forms of physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence against girls, including corporal punishment, female genital mutilation, crimes committed in the name of honor, rape, sexual exploitation, early marriages, forced marriages and forced pregnancy. These and other forms of violence must be recognized as human rights violations, whether they are committed within or outside the family.

We also urge states to step up their efforts towards ensuring gender equality and universal access to education by all children, with a view to changing gender stereotypes and prejudices, achieving equal treatment and opportunities, and encouraging the development and exercise of leadership by girls.

Governments must also ensure universal access to comprehensive sexuality education as a prerequisite for the full development of personality, sexual wellbeing and quality of life in order to help young people mature into sexually healthy and responsible adults. We strongly believe that a multidimensional perspective of sexuality education, addressing biological, psychological, human and socio-cultural dimensions of sexuality, is essential to help young people develop a more comprehensive understanding of their bodies, their relationships with other people, and their relationship with their community and society.

Girls in situations that make them more at risk of human rights abuses are entitled to particular attention from the global community, including situations of poverty, migration and armed conflict.

The growing poverty and the negative impacts of economic globalization that sustains it are increasingly creating an environment non-conducive to the protection of the human rights of girls. Moreover, migrant women and girls continue to face multiple forms of discrimination and abuse, especially as our two regions continue to be a major source and recipient of migrant populations. Finally, foreign occupation, wars and the threats of military interventions not only invite abuse of the rights of girls and women, but also contribute to the increasing militarization, especially in the Middle East, creating severe impediments to the development and empowerment of girls and women.

We call on all states to ensure that all the previous commitments for the protection of the human rights of girls and women, as well as the Agreed Conclusions issued at the end of this meeting will be translated into actions and effectively implemented to put an end to the systematic violations of the human rights of girls.

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