

In the name of Allah the most Merciful and Mighty

Report of Mission to Herat

Date: 17 Feb 2004 to 21 Feb 2004

Aim of the Mission: Analysis and monitoring the women's condition who were evicted by the Islamic Republic of Iran and monitoring the reasons for Burning issues in Herat Province.

The members of the mission:

1. Professor Mahboba Hoquqmal, State Minister of Women's Affairs
2. Dr. Suraya Rahim 'Sobhrang', the technical Deputy of Ministry of Women's Affairs
3. Mr. Khedra Baizayee, representative of Ministry of Justice
4. Mr. Shah Wali "Safi" representative of ministry of Interior.
5. Judge Mehro Hamid, member of the Judicial Reform Commission
6. Miss Nadia, lecturer in Law and Political Science Faculty
7. Miss Noorgahan, lecturer in Shari'a Faculty
8. Miss Karima, member of the Human Rights Commission

On the base of the request of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Presidential Decree of No.5470/ 18/11/1382, the mission left to Herat on Tuesday, 17 Feb 2004.

In the airport of Herat the responsible people welcomed the mission for Department of Women's Affairs, Women Council, Department of Education and the Security Department.

After that in a meeting, which was held with the responsible people in the guesthouse of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the beginning the Deputy of Department of Education welcomed the mission. After that Prof. Mahbooba Hoquqmal talked about the ways for unity, collaboration and implementation of the women's rights in society. After that Dr.Surarya Rahim Sobhrang gave explanations about the aim of the mission besides the introduction of the members of the mission.

Also at 9PM an introductory meeting was held with Ismail Khan in Jihad Guest House. After the introduction of the mission, the aim of the mission was explained. In response, he promised for any kind of support to the mission and asked the responsible people of Herat Affairs Department to provide them facilities.

The other day, the mission visited the Ansar Camp or the GTC to monitor the condition of the women who were evicted.

The Ansar Camp, which is formed in 1382 and has been working for the last nine months, is in Guzargah and it is related to the department of Migration. The technical and the financial supports are given by UNHCR to this camp and the Security Department, UNHCR and the Department of migration take the responsibility of the security of these women.

According to the report of Miss Malika, the responsible person for the shelter, 32 women were evicted due to alleged “Moral Corruption, drug use, having no guardian and running away from home” or “those who were arrested by the police and were then evicted or they themselves asked the government to evict them due to the problems they were facing from family.” Among them the houses of 18 were found within the country with the struggle of the responsible people of the shelter and they were given to their families. 2 of them are sent to the Shohada Shelter in Kabul. The other 11 women are in Herat shelter. Also Roya d/o Nazok Mir who was 19 years old tried to commit suicide many times and in the third time she committed suicide by burning herself. According to the report of the responsible people of the shelter, Roya who was 19 years old, was born in Mazar and when she was 5 years old, her father died, her mother married for the second time. After sometimes her mother runs away with a Commander by force. In Iran Roya’s mother gives birth to a baby son of the third husband. In Iran Roya’s family do the smuggling of the drugs and other illegal jobs. Also Roya’s father had a friend with the name of Ibrahim, and Roya is given by force to Ibrahim without Nikah when she was only 14 or 15. Ibrahim is also the one who is smuggling drugs.

When relation between Roya’s mother and the third husband gets worse, he kills Roya’s mother in front of her and her three brothers’ eyes and he runs away.

After sometimes Roya’s husband was arrested by the Iranian police and sent to the jail. With the guidance and the help of her Afghani neighbors, left to the border with her three brothers. As she was having no guardian and that she hated her husband she wanted to enter Afghanistan and have a peaceful life, but when she entered Afghanistan, nothing was going on as she wished. Roya was sent to the Ansar Shelter and her three brothers to the Juvenile House of Correction and they were separated from each other.

Roya was under the mental pressure and always saw her mother’s bloody face and her brothers before her eyes. She was discouraged by her and her brothers’ future life and wanted to die. She tried twice to commit suicide and she survived due to the efforts of the responsible doctors. And at last she died by burning herself.

In present, within the shelter, they are provided the opportunities to attend courses as literacy, income generation as beading, tailoring and flower making. The teachers within the shelter teach these.

On Saturdays they are taken out of shelter for bathing and on Fridays for entertainment.

Some of these women are drug addicts and they have been cured by the doctors and now they are in a better condition. The living and the food conditions of them is also fine. Some of these women are having mental and other serious sicknesses and according to the sayings of Miss Malika, they are having problems in completion their medical tests. In Herat there are no modern medical facilities and possibilities.

And as a result of visit with them, it was noticed that they were not mentally fine and they were not sure of taking decision for their future life. They are really very worried about their future life and are afraid of it and they were not sure if any organization is to help them and guide them to choose their future life. Some of them were not ready to go to their families although their addresses were found. They are interested in learning, also

they want to have a respectful life, and entering into the social affairs is one of their demands for their future life.

The information which was taken from them after asking about their past life, we came to know that the reasons for their present condition and their bad luck are the childhood marriages, force marriages, drug smuggling which were due to the poverty and unfair family and social atmosphere.

In this way, for finding out about the reasons for self-burning issues, we had meetings separately with responsible people of regional office of AIHRC, medical personnel of MoPH, Criminal police of the security department, UNHCR, Midca Mondeil and some personalities and some social organs. These meetings gave our speed to our working process and we were into some realities.

According to the census of the Criminal Police and the registration of the hospitals of Herat within the present year, 52 burning cases have taken place in all over Herat province. These 52 cases of self-burning of women included women between 14 to 60 in age. There has taken place four burning issues of men. From these 52 women 35 were died and 17 were cured and are feeling fine now. Among these cases four are followed up by the police on the base of the claiming of the families and there is no defendant and claimant for the other cases.

There were also cases of beating of women and violence against women. The police have been following up all the cases as the result of violence against women and have promised to help all the related organs in this regard.

As the result of the meetings with different organs and people, the mission is presenting the main reasons of the self-burning as follows:

1. Force marriages
2. Marriages during childhood
3. Lack of the awareness of society about the Islamic and the legal rights of women
4. Negative effects of war and some **spiritual nodes**
5. Disliked social customs and cultures (Dowry, too much costs of weddings, competitions of the families)
6. Copying or learning the culture of self-burning from the region they have been migrants in.

It is worth mention that besides practicing their plan, the mission has also visited the organs which were established there as the Department of women's affairs, the office of Women's Council, the Department of Social Affairs of women's prison, the artistic sections of prisons, House of Correction, Afghan Nasaji Factory, Shahrak e Sanati and many other established organs.

At the end the teachers, the heads of the schools of girls, department of women's council, DoWA and other social organs attended a banquet, which was arranged by the Governor of Herat.

In this banquet, the Governor along with the other respective organs promised to take every possible step for eliminating such reasons for these violence against women using their all available facilities and to practice some special programs for making people aware. The mission came back to Kabul on Saturday.

Thus, the mission recommends the following to prevent the self-burning issues and for the betterment of the conditions of the women who were evicted:

1. The ministries of Education, Higher Education, Women's Affairs, Interior and the AIHRC should have special programs to put an end to the factors for self-burning and violence against women by forming advocacy, educational and reconciliation committees.
2. Establishing Family Court in the province in order to respond to the family problems of self-burning and committing suicide.
3. Establishing the Marriage Office in different area for registration of the marriages legally
4. Following the ones committing violence through the related organs
5. Establishing the reconciliation Committees for the families
6. Equal and responsible act of the courts towards the cases relating to women
7. Advocacy through media to eliminate all the disliked customs
8. Providing the opportunities for the working women
9. Appointing professional and qualitative people to be the head of the Girls high Schools
10. Establishing a shelter for always for women who are without any guardian, and providing the opportunities of education to rehabilitate them and restore their characters.
11. Curing the drug addict women to prevent the increase of such negative acts in the society.
12. Appointing the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Migration and UNHCR in army department near the borders.

As while the entrance of the migrants, the families were separated in the borders, the women have been taken to one arm department and the men to the other, and are evicted in different times, that this sometimes cause some misuse of women and girls.

Above is the report of mission to Herat, which is made and presented.

Regards