



**THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE SYRIAN ARAB  
REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions of Member States of the Security Council, and with reference to the Arria-Formula meeting scheduled to take place on Friday 17 January 2014 to discuss the status of women in the light of the current crisis in Syrian Arab Republic, has the honor to highlight the following:

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic, while acknowledging the importance of women participation at all levels and in all circumstances on an equal basis with men, and while welcoming any contribution that falls within the advancement of the Syrian women situation, the Mission, however, would like, herein, to briefly inform and update the Security Council members of the situation of the Syrian women and girls, before and after the crisis.

Syrian Women before the crisis:

The Syrian Arab Republic has long been preeminent among the countries in the Arab and Islamic world in securing all the necessary provisions and environment for enabling women to enjoy equal rights with men, free from the ignorance, blindness and social and intellectual shortcomings that prevail elsewhere. A woman serves as a Vice-President in Syria, at a time when other countries ban women from their basic rights as a citizen and human.

The rights of women in the Syrian Arab Republic have never been an issue throughout its history. On the contrary, Syria has been an example in gender equality and empowerment of women. Moreover, the Syrian Arab Republic has always been an integral part of the UN efforts and mechanisms which promote the empowerment of women around the world. Furthermore, Syrian Arab Republic is party to several international treaties related to the human rights of women, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Syrian Constitution guarantees full equality between women and men. The Syrian Government has always afforded women every opportunity to participate fully and effectively in political, social, cultural and economic life. This has been always guaranteed in the Syrian Constitutions, and been always the practice in real life.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has continuously observed, in all laws and decrees, measures to preserve the sanctity of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Hence, strengthening women's participation in political life and socio-economic development and encouraging women to become involved in political and public decision-making processes have always been on the top of its priorities.

As a result of these efforts, Syrian women have reached the highest positions in the State; a woman took up the position of Vice President of the Republic for Cultural Affairs in 2006 and a woman was appointed as a cultural adviser to the Office of the President in 2007. Moreover, a woman was appointed as an adviser on political and media affairs to the Office of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic in 2008. The proportion of women who are members of the National Assembly continues to increase every time a new parliament is elected. For instance, in 1971, there were only four women in the first legislature, accounting for 2 per cent of the total membership of the National Assembly. However, when the ninth parliament was elected in 2011, there were 31 women, accounting for 12.4 per cent of the membership. In 1976, a woman was appointed for the first time to a ministerial post and in the period from 1976 to 1993 some 3 per cent of the members of the Government were women. That figure rose to 6 per cent between 1999 and 2009 and then 9 per cent in 2010, with the appointment of three women ministers. In the Government that was formed in 2011, three women hold important ministerial portfolios (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Housing and Construction, and Ministry of State for the Environment).

In the diplomatic representation, the number of women in senior positions has increased. Fifteen per cent of ambassadors were women as recently as 2011, compared to 11 per cent in 2005. By 2007, some 35 per cent of those working in the diplomatic ranks were women, as against a figure of 30 per cent in 2004.

As for the judiciary body, women accounted for 12 per cent of the members of the profession in 1992, a figure that had risen to 19 per cent by 2002. Some 14.5 per cent of State attorneys are now women. According to Ministry of Justice statistics, there are 240 women judges in the Syrian Arab Republic, representing 15 per cent of the total number of judges (1,508) as of 2011.

As for Education Process, the percentage of girls attending all educational stages was 53% of the total number of students as of 2011.

Economic and social policies on gender equality are included in plans, programmes and projects, and provisions are made for the realization of gender equity and equality in the public and private sectors. Efforts are envisaged to: increase

women's participation in economic activities; strengthen the role of women in economic life and boost their economic rights; support women facing the challenges of economic globalization; give women a larger share of loans and of funding for small and medium-sized enterprises; and offer women services that will allow them to reconcile their family duties and their role in economic development.

The law recognizes equality for men and women working in the public and the private sectors and the right, to which many women across the world aspire, to receive equal pay for equal work.

#### Syrian Women after the crisis:

Regrettably, the current crisis in Syria undermined the positive situation women had been enjoying. The current crisis has given rise to some strange and inhumane practices that contravene the values that the Syrian people hold dear, the conventions to which Syria is party to, the country's efforts to promote the rights of women and children, all human rights conventions, the principles of the pure Islamic religion and, indeed, the most basic rules of human decency. These practices have been brought about by the mercenaries and Takfiris who have infiltrated the country from all around the world to propagate obscurantist Wahhabi ideas that debase women, relegating them to the status of slaves or objects on which terrorists can vent their own psychological complexes.

The most prominent instance, and one whose effect on women has been particularly acute, is the Fatwa on "Marriage Jihad" issued by a preacher linked to an armed terrorist group. The Fatwa provides for women to accompany terrorists into combat zones and "assist them in jihad" by making themselves available to the terrorists. In such cases, a "marriage" can last for as little as an hour, and a woman can perform "marriage jihad" several times a day with several different men. More information about this brutal practice can be found in document A/68/487.

It is unfortunate that extremist armed opposition groups, such as Islamic State for Iraq and Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra, who are affiliated to Al Qaeda, are undermining the freedoms that Syrian women and girls enjoyed for long time in the Syrian society, and they continue to impose strict and discriminatory rules on Syrian women and girls that have no basis neither in the Syrian laws, nor in the Syrian social and cultural values. The harsh rules that those terrorist groups are administering, in areas under their control in northern and northeastern Syria, violate the Syrian women's and girls' human rights and limit their ability to carry out essential daily activities. It even has far-reaching impacts on women's and girls' future, affecting their ability to obtain education, and even procure basic necessities crucial to their survival.

The extremist armed groups Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State for Iraq and Sham have enforced their own interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, by requiring women and girls to wear headscarves (hijabs) and full-length robes (abayas). The clothing restrictions also forbade women wearing jeans, tight-fitting clothing, skirts or dresses

above the ankle and make-up. In some areas, the groups ordered women not to style their hair or visit hair salons. In other areas, the groups are enforcing discriminatory measures prohibiting women and girls, particularly those who do not abide by the dress code, from moving freely in public, working, and attending school.

Other restrictions include: Restrictions on Movement, Restrictions on Employment and Access to Necessities, Restrictions on Access to Education, Abductions and a Climate of Fear for Women and Girls.

It is unfortunate that those who call themselves "revolutionists" are putting the Syrian women in a situation where they can be treated as merchandise. Women had been subject to forced and child marriage, sexual harassment and many other violations for their basic rights.

While speaking on the situation of the Syrian women inside Syria, the situation that Syrian women face in the refugee camps cannot be ignored, where Syrian women and girls face insecurity and are being trafficked, raped and subjected to sexual abuse, human trafficking, forced and child marriage, all of which has been documented in international reports. Syrian Women in refugee-camps are being sexually harassed by employers, landlords, faith-based aid distributors, and even community members in refugee camps in neighboring countries.

In conclusion, and keeping in mind all the information previously provided by the Syrian Mission to the Security Council members via hundreds of official letters which document the violations and abuses of the terrorist armed groups against the Syrian people, including women and girls, the Syrian Government continues to do its utmost to restore the rights of Syrian women as it used to be, and it urges all members of security council to exert their efforts to lift all these restrictions and abuses on the Syrian women, by putting a pressure on those countries who spend billions of dollars to spread the retarded and handicapped image of the women, rather than spending this money on improving the status of women in their own countries.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations avails itself of its opportunity to renew the Permanent Missions of Member States of the Security Council, the assurances of its highest consideration.

Permanent Missions of Member States  
of the Security Council

