



THE ROLE OF MEN IN IMPLEMENTING CEDAW

FORUM: UN WOMEN

ISSUE: THE ROLE OF MEN IN IMPLEMENTING CEDAW

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POSITION: DEPUTY CHAIR

1) Introduction:

a) Introduction:

Discrimination, which is the unjust treatment of minority groups is as old as the mankind itself and it is still present today. Minorities' differences are usually seen unacceptable or wrong which have been causing discrimination in many ways for centuries. Creating an equal environment and eradicating any kind of discrimination has been one of the primary goals of the United Nations since its establishment and it is listed officially both in the millennium and the sustainable development goals. There have been many attempts to eradicate the discrimination especially regarding color, sexual preference and sex in order to equalize the whole citizens regardless of their qualities listed above.



Figure 1. early acts for women rights

However, discrimination does not specifically need to be towards a minority. Women are also a target of the discriminatory groups which causes them to be treated in drastic ways and seen as only mothers or a group of people who were born to satisfy the needs of men. This ideology has been present for a really long time, and unfortunately it still continues in some parts of the world. With the globalizing and evolving world, women rights have been

developing and gaining importance with the immense growth of population with an open mind, which is a term used to describe people who are accepting minorities and who are against discrimination.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. It is a major step towards eradicating gender discrimination. As it can be implemented from its name, CEDAW aims to eradicate discrimination of women in any way, to make them equal citizens and also individuals in society alongside with men who were to be seen the superior gender.

The delegates of the UN Women committee will discuss upon ways of involving men into this agreement since they do not see themselves related to it directly because of their gender, which is the essence of this argument. That reckless point of view is not damaging the cause and without men this treaty cannot be applied as their contributions would make this treaty applicable.

b) Definition of Key Words:

Discrimination: The treatment towards a group of minority due to a quality of them which is seen as unjust and inequitable.

Stereotype: A widely fixed idea or point of view towards something or someone that is associated with and labeled on that particular thing, individual or group.

Legislation: The set of rules which is enforced by the government for all of the country to obey, the legal constitution.

Global Gender Gap Report: The report which is prepared annually by officials of UN that shows the percentage of equality in each state which later on indicates the bests and the worsts of the year in terms of gender equality.

Pay Gap: The difference of money or loans that women and men receive as a result of their labour or work.

Feminism: Feminism is the advocacy of women rights and equality of genders. It is the idea of women being equal to men in anyway.

2) General Overview:

a) Historical Background

Women's rights was established by the United Nations itself approximately 70 years ago. It contains many rights such as but not limited to voting, having an equal wage, and living without misery and violence, however it is up to the nations themselves whether they will follow those rights, in other words these are the rules that are accepted voluntarily. Discrimination of gender has been rapidly common throughout the whole history, this lead to consequences such as sexual harassment and unequal wage in comparison to men which are unjust treatments in many ways and are the things to be solved by the implementation of CEDAW. This aim has been the priority of UN



Figure 2. women seeking equality through slogan

Women since its establishment and it has not been fully accomplished yet. CEDAW is a huge improvement in this progress which makes it even more crucial for it to be achieved fully.

After long years of suppression, women decided to stand up and get the rights they deserved and were in need of. Between the years 1848-1998, the era named as 'Women's Rights Movement', is the time period where women stood out and earned their respected rights in most parts of the world. Many women became the symbol of this movement, supported it and contributed in any way which made this movement successful and recognized. However, women rights are still an issue that



Figure 3. a campaign of UN WOMEN sowing gender stereotype and violence according to gender, including discrimination

needs to be fully accomplished. The reason that prevents it from happening is that there is an apparent part of the world who sticks to superstitions, religion, dogmatic information and shows those listed above as an excuse to diminish or weaken the women rights. In addition it has been recorded that the portion of world which is described as dogmatic is mostly men, which is not a surprise at all. In general, men have always been a little reckless towards the issue of women rights since it did not concern them and their benefit in a direct way. Some opposed to the idea of women having equal rights as men, some supported it and some did not care. However, there is the undeniable truth that the discrimination which is aimed to be solved by CEDAW is mostly caused by the men themselves, due to this fact men have a significant position in solving this issue. They cannot be ignored during this process and their contributions are vital for CEDAW to be successful.

b) Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Yemen: Yemen was ranked as the worst country in terms of women rights according to the Global Gender Gap Report for 2018. Yemeni women lack rights and opportunities especially in terms of politics, economics and education which prevents them from becoming active and equal citizens of the society. This inequality leads the discrimination of women in many fields due to the lack of rights given to them. They have been the worst country for women rights 9 years in a row and this leads to Yemen becoming one of the top countries for discrimination against women. This ranking could be encouraging for the states who seek

to find a reason to show as an excuse to the discrimination in their borders since even the Yemeni government is discriminatory towards women.

United States of America: United States of America was one of the first countries to take action in terms of women rights. However, as time goes by, the Republican Party’s point of view towards the issue weakens and the misconception of the term ‘national sovereignty’ becomes an obstacle for the USA to pay attention to women rights and treaties. That is why

Gender and education in Yemen society

Enrolment ratio*
in %, 2005



* Combined gross enrolment rate for primary, secondary, and tertiary education

Adult literacy rate
in %, 15 yrs. and older, 2005



Source: UNDP

Graph 1. graph showing the education rate in Yemen according to gender

USA signed but not ratified the CEDAW, which raises questions about the commitment of the USA for the issue as a whole since there are only 7 countries left that did not sign the treaty and USA being one of them is definitely tragic since USA is one of the biggest countries in terms of both land, power and human rights in general.



Figure 4. Logo of UN Women & HeForShe campaign

UN Women: UN Women is an United Nations organization which has dedicated itself to provide gender equality and allow women to be active members of our society. It has been the primary advocate for women rights and assisted many nations on the way of achieving gender equality. It is the torch that shows the way to the nations during the implementation process of the CEDAW which resulted in a total success and signatures of many countries. HeForShe is the perfect example of an UN Women campaign that tries to include men into the actions to be taken to achieve gender equality once and for all.

Iceland: Iceland, according to the Global Gender Gap Report for 2018, is the country that has the most gender equality. The women have rights in terms of education and voting which contributes and involves them into the society. In accordance with the report, the rate of discrimination against women is lower than many countries which makes Iceland stand out as an example for the nations who seek to achieve the gender equality. However, even Iceland did not fully accomplish gender equality and discrimination according to gender can be seen in many fields, but Iceland still has the closest level of equality that CEDAW seeks which makes it a developed and well adjusted nation in terms of women rights and a supporter of the fight to eradicate the discrimination against women in any forms.



Figure 5. Man supporting the women rights as an activist

c) How Can Be Involved?

There are many ways men can involve themselves to the issue of women rights and preventing the discrimination against them. First of all, it is important that men learn how to listen and respect women, give them credit, thank them and make them feel equal. Men should embrace the ideology of

women and men being equal. Calling and referring themselves as feminists would even elevate the effect of their contributions. Accepting feminism would create a difference both within that individual and within the society for men. The base of their support for women rights should be adopting the concept in a correct way.

Female feminists' voice is often mocked by men since they may sound selfish, crazy and emotional. That is why it is so important that men can take action and make their voice heard. If the person who promotes feminism and encourages women rights to other men is a male, the effect increases immensely as other men would take someone from their same gender more seriously in a gender related issue. Sexist people would even reject listening to what women have to say, so a male's advocacy in this issue holds great importance. However, the chance to speak and express ideas has to be given to the women first, in terms of their rights. Men has to support them in any way, but they have to be careful not to overshadow them as it would contradict with the purpose of feminism. Men should interact when they feel like women are being ignored and not taken seriously because that is when men can make a difference and make their voice heard.

These might be discouraging for men since they might be criticised and mocked about their support for women rights in the society. However, they should take a stand even it causes controversies as it is the main action that empowers the aim to improve women rights and eradicate discrimination against women. That is why, men should advocate women rights, pay attention to the cause, point out what should be done and lead other men to a world of equality amongst genders. They should join the movements such as HeForShe, make their voice heard and help women gain their rights once and for all.

d) Timeline of Events:

1878	The first ever International Congress of Women's Rights was held in Paris which started the women rights movements. It was based on the idea of 'an adult woman is equal to an adult man'.
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28 February 1909	The first ever National Woman's Day is observed in the United States.
10 December 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly which is the document that happens to be the solid beginning of the fight for equality.
1979	CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly.
2000	The Millennium Development Goals were launched and it included a goal to ensure gender equality in the next thousand years.
2 July 2010	The UN formed a new organization under itself called UN Women to ensure that the full commitment and effort is being put into the issue.
2015	Sustainable Development Goals were launched by the UNDP, with a goal of gender equality.

e) Conventions and Treaties:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This is a convention that makes the base of all the human rights and it is accepted by a huge amount of nations. The whole document is about the Human Rights which are important in this subject as it proves the act of discrimination to be wrong and unacceptable. Especially, Article 3 suggests that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." which is an article to protect women rights and proves any act of discrimination wrong.

3) Conclusion:

a) Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There is no such example for a failed treaty for this particular topic as the topic itself is based on a treaty. As CEDAW is designed to eradicate discrimination against women especially from men, the main reason can be seen as the inefficiency of men in the issue. However, the reason for these treaties not to achieve its full potential is the lack of commitment shown by the other states' governments, especially who do not value women rights. To ensure the full benefit of these treaties, full commitment has to be shown, otherwise it will never be completed fully.

b) Possible Solutions:

Rashida Manjoo, a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women once said "States must acknowledge that violence against women is not the root problem, but that violence occurs because other forms of discrimination are allowed to flourish.", which means the discrimination of all kinds has to be taken into consideration while writing resolutions, as one solution of a specific discrimination can be effective for solving another one too.

As it is well-known, discrimination is mainly caused by the lack of education or closed minds regarding a specific quality of a minority group. That is why education and raising awareness is the best way to decrease the discrimination. The target of those education and raising awareness actions should not only be the general public, but also the religious leaders, political leaders, celebrities and important people in the society so that they understand the issue better too. If they understand it better and be convinced, their attitude and actions towards the issue may change in a positive way which can affect the decision of many citizens who see them as trustworthy, right and leaders of the society.

Also, there are still countries who do not propose equal rights for the women in their own legislations. Legislative adjustments is necessary to change the perspective of a country towards the issue which is something that has a major impact upon the faith of this treaty. Also, this would contribute to the problem of lack of commitment shown by states as it was mentioned in the ‘previous attempts to resolve the issue’ part. In addition to this, international conventions can be held and new treaties can be signed to legally bound countries with the cause directly and ensure their full participation. All the countries who are signatories to CEDAW has to adopt all the necessary measurements and legislations in order to confide the obligation of eradicating all forms of discrimination against women.



Figure6. Men supporting the women rights as activists

c) Notes from the chair:

First of all, congratulations on making this far on the chair report. As you can understand, this topic nor the chair report focuses upon the specification of men’s role in CEDAW except for a few sections. It focuses on the violation of women rights and how the women are treated because that is the main essence and reason of the discrimination against women and the men can be involved in this treaty if those problems were to be solved or replaced through many ways indicated in the possible solutions part. You should do additional research upon the topic and gather your ideas on your resolutions and clauses. I recommend each of you to write at least a few clauses to this issue and not ignore it and focus on the other agenda item as it may seem like it is easier and more appealing to write resolutions upon. We will be expecting resolutions for this agenda aswell so please come prepared for this issue too, to make the lobbying process easier. Do not hesitate to contact me via my email (halilcenker2021@stu.kocschool.k12.tr) if you have any questions. I can’t wait to see you in September ! Here are some links where you can start off your individual research:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html>

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