



The First Edition of the Newsletter

Preface

We are often faced in our daily lives and work with negative attitudes once we mention the phrase: human rights. Some people see in it a theoretical extravagance, which an Arab individual does not have the luxury to think about taking into consideration the current conditions. Others think that this concept is a Western product, which should be confronted as same as anything coming from the West. Others believe that human rights are contradictory with all traditions and behaviors of the Islamic Arab societies. In addition to that, and in spite of the decent message carries through human rights, human rights is often in a position of conflict with many interests, which are based on ignoring the others and their rights. As a result, working in the field of human rights does not happen in an enabling environment despite the global movement towards implementing human rights.

All efforts currently paid by all human rights defenders around the world can never pay off without having a positive environment towards human rights principles and the realization of their importance in developing nations. After that comes the joint efforts of all those defenders along with communities, which requires high social awareness about human rights and how to seek them where the role of the human rights educators appears.

In light of the above, declaring and implementing human rights can only be materialized through a community that believes in its importance, in addition to a collective social culture as a base. Thus, human rights education seems to be the only logical entrance to achieve this goal, especially in Arab communities, which have suffered through out history from weak commitment to human rights.

The realization of this truth leads to believing in the importance of organized work for individuals and specialized institutions to promote for human rights values in a comprehensive manner by coordinating the efforts of human rights educators in the region (especially those who come from common culture with common human rights problems).

Based on that, it was important to establish the Arab Network for Human Rights & Citizenship Education (ANHRE) to act as a comprehensive coordination framework among human rights educators in the region. The Network "ANHRE" aims at making human rights part of the thinking, consciousness, and behavior of every human in the region in order to become a style of life that guarantees living with dignity and enjoying full rights declared by religions and laws.

From this first edition, we look forward to a positive interaction from those interested in human rights at the regional and international level, by supporting the network's goals to serve human rights cause in the Arab region.

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Mohammad Abdulla Alsayeh
Chief Editor



Introduction

I was asked to prepare the first opening article for the first edition of the newsletter issued by the Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education – ANHRE. So, why human rights? Why citizenship? And what's the secret of the name ANHRE (rivers)?

First of all, most of the institutions and individuals who agreed to become part of this network are activists in organizations, institutions, or programs for human rights. Some of them teach, some of them defend, some of them observe, and some of them research; each in his/her field. The total number of members at this network is 75, which, if compared to the original number of people in the Arab world, forms 1% of the actual number of institutions and individuals working in the field of human rights and citizenship in the Arab world and it could be even less. Accordingly, this network cannot represent all of those working in the field of human rights, so it was decided to consider this network as a coordination framework for a group of activists aiming to reach the minimum level of representation .

As for the word 'citizenship' it was also a representation of the institutions working in the field of citizenship education. Dividing the two words (citizenship and human rights) is a division between what a right is, and what a contractual issue is. Citizenship is a social contract between people through which they agree on various issues of their lives and future. However, this contract requires a matrix of rights to become a reference for citizenship in order to develop, improve, and protect its outputs.

I can say, the Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education is a coordination network that tries to unite the current efforts in the field of human rights and citizenship education. It is a network that involves members whose interests based on its importance to enrich the Arab experience in human rights and citizenship education.

We looked for an acronym for the network, to help people remember it and which is suitable for the network's goals. We brainstormed, discussed, wrote, and talked, and then from Sudan and its rivers came the rivers 'ANHRE' to symbolize giving, taking, mixing, and continuity of life, hope and love. ANHRE (rivers) gives a meaning to solidarity and crossing borders in order to reach our goals, ambitions, and dreams, which we grew up with. We say we dreamt of a home country where human would feel their freedom protected and humanity considered sacred along with a person's citizenship.

This is our hope, nothing more, just to have one big home that embraces all of us; where we all interact. A home where we do not feel oppressed but rather proud and belonging, where we give without limitation and it gives us back without limitations as well.

We didn't announce that we are a network, but we are one of many networks that aim at interacting to weave a future together and remain positive in our directions and thoughts to create a better tomorrow and another possible fair world.

Refaat Sabbah

The Chairman of ANHRE



Founding Statement of the Network

Arab Network for Human Rights & Citizenship Education - ANHRE

Towards fulfilling the great need of a forum joining all institutions, organizations, and individuals working in the domain of human rights education and citizenship and towards a constructive collaboration and exchange of expertise and promotion and strengthening of human rights and citizenship culture and education based on participatory and practical methodologies.

This forum has joined more than 75 individuals representing institutions and organizations working in this field in the Arab world aiming at establishing a coordination body that unifies efforts and invests potentials that are expected to empower these organizations and facilitate their work and fulfill their goals.

In order to create this coordination body through a transparent and democratic process, these organizations have elected a coordination committee, which is formed of seven members to carry out the responsibility of officially declaring the establishment of this body after referring to members and after going through standard procedure and development of needed documents.

During the first meeting of this committee held in Beirut in the period 9-11 November 2008, this Founding Statement was developed in which the vision and objectives of the network were identified after the consultation with all members. As a result, we came up with the following outcomes:

In the name of all members who have elected us as coordination and founding committee, we would like to announce the foundation of the Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education –ANHRE.

ANHRE is an independent regional network, which joins into its membership individuals and institutions/ organizations active in the field of human rights and citizenship education in the Arab region. This network aims through its activities to strengthen human rights education and promotion of the concept of citizenship through making available the information resources and forum for exchange of expertise of different effective learning and training strategies as well as capacity building of its members to work more effectively in this field.

For this purpose, several working sub-committee will be formed to specialize in certain areas and to participate in global campaigns and international forums especially relating to the international mechanisms for human rights protection as well as joint initiatives towards fruitful partnerships among members serving the goals of the network.

The network is structured to include the general assembly, the coordination committee and executive management, which runs the network from Amman, Jordan through its regional office.



The Coordination Committee is formed of seven members (chair- deputy chair for public relation and resource mobilization, deputy chair for monitoring and programming, secretary general, Committee Coordinator and finance officer) as follows:

Chair: Refaat Sabbah- Palestine

Deputy chair for public relation and resource mobilization: Karima Benjelloun - Morocco

Deputy chair for monitoring and programming: Firas Laeq- Iraq

Secretary General: Ghasan Al Saleh- Iraq

Financial Officer: Arwa Khader Elburai – Egypt

Committee Coordinator: Sawsan Al Refai- Yemen

Assistant Committee Coordinator: Vian Raheem- Iraq

The Executive Manager: Fotouh Younes- Jordan



The Network Organizations' News

Al-Haq Organization for Human Rights- Iraq

Al-Haq Organization for Human Right displayed a film "The Truth Committees" during the period 11-12 March 2009 in Al-Multqi district, where four countries' experience have been discussed: South Africa, Morocco, Eastern Timor and Peru.

The aim of this activity is to share the experience of these countries in addition to explain how to establish "The truth committees" and how to select their members. The participants were asked if Iraq needs now to have such committees, the risk which may occur in case of establishing these committees and they came up with recommendations and mechanism for stopping human rights violations.

The Organization has conducted 4 workshops which targeted 25 participant: district directors, council members, tribe leaders, governmental institutions directors, teachers, army men, police officers, pupils and Mukhtars from each village.

Al- Multqa District/ Kirkuk- Iraq is considered as one of the most crisis areas, in which many terrorist attacks occurred and one of them resulted into bombing the car of the District Director whom he lost his hands after this attack.





Iraqi Organization for Children Education and Rehabilitation

The Organization has implemented educational programs targeting children from ages 14-18 funded by Oxfam and in collaboration with the Italian Union. The program included teaching both English and Arabic Languages, sports, and theatre performance. Also, the program offered handicrafts training for girls and boys such as glass painting, wood carving, calligraphy, brass decoration, and painting on cloth.



The organization has also implemented a number of various activities such as the computer literacy project for boys and girls in Baghdad – Amereyah. Furthermore, there was a rehabilitation program for uneducated girls to become teachers at kindergartens in Baghdad – Amereyah in Karkh. The organization worked on raising awareness of voters in the same area reaching 2000 persons.

The activity was done food items distribution to 200 poor families and orphans in municipalities in collaboration with Islamic Relief Foundation. It has, also worked with Peace Organization to return missing items for IDPs families and with the Iraqi Orphan Society to take care took care of 20 orphans with a monthly assistance fees.

Partners-Jordan conducted two four-day Training of Trainers courses for 20 participants on “Advocacy Skills” in Yemen & Lebanon, on the 9th-12th and 15th-18th of March 2009 respectively.

This training program is part of a project entitled “Strengthening Civil Society Advocacy and Leadership Skills” funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund – UNDEF and aims at strengthening the advocacy and leadership skills of civil society organizations in Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan, and enabling local community members to participate in decision making at local level and advocate more effectively for democratic change in their communities.



Human Rights Capacity Building Project (BENAA) - Egypt

Human Rights Capacity Building Project (BENAA) has organized its first & second training workshops between 15-17 March and 12-14 April 2009 for media people and activists about promoting human rights education for elder people.

The training program involves four main workshops that address several basic elder people's human rights issues. Two workshops had been conducted under "Media Role in protecting the Human rights of Elder people". During the conducted workshops, some issues were addressed such as



elder human rights principles & international conventions, general vision on the status of elder people in Egypt, civil societies associations & governments' role in looking after the rights of elder people, and the constitutional physical & psychological needs for those people. They addressed, as well, the Media role in protecting the rights of elder people.

Sixty journalists, Media people and activists took part in both workshops from different Media institutions all over Egypt. Besides, the project had organized an honorary celebration for the voluntary students from different Egyptian universities that participated in the project in the 60th anniversary of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 2008 in February. This project aims to integrate young people in voluntary work that enhances youth roles in promoting human rights culture all over the world. Human Rights Capacity Building Project (BENAA) was established in 2001; it is a joint project between the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Egypt. The purpose of the project is to support the governments' institutions and increases their capacities for more promotion of human rights principles. It cooperates with different governmental institutions such as Ministry of Information, Radio-Television Union, Supreme Council of Press, Ministry of Interior with all its Departments, Ministry of Justice, Parliamentary organizations, Bar associations, Educational associations and The National Council for Women. Furthermore, the project organized many other training workshops for building the efficiency of the civil society's organizations working on Human Rights Education.

Finally, the project focuses on building the capacity of citizens in order to empower them, to know their rights, to raise their awareness when dealing with judicial systems, Police and any other organizations. In addition, it aims to provide a great amount of theoretical, professional and juridical human rights knowledge to raise the awareness of human right all over the Egyptian society that lightens the society's needs and provide better discussions on human rights issues.

In addition, the project aims to accomplish its goals in three integral activities which are training, publishing and the technical support that helps all in increasing knowledgeable capacities for individuals & institutions and creating national knowledgeable accumulation.

Week Action Plan 20-26\4\2009 during the Global Campaign for Education - Jordan

The Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education- ANHRE will participate in the Global Campaign for Education that implemented in most of Middle East and North Africa's countries including "Jordan" Entitled "The Big Read and Lifelong Learning". Since the formation of the Global Campaign for Education in 1999, thousands of non-governmental organizations and educational unions in over 120 countries have united to reinforce literacy. It is a basic human right and a crucial asset for raising awareness among people and creating political will among governments and political leaders in the international community to keep their promise in providing free and compulsory primary Education for All.



GCE is conducted in April every year through an international action week. Efforts are gathered and several actions that all focus on literacy, its importance and education for all take place in this week which in the Campaign Action Week under the title "The Big Read- Youth and Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning". In addition, GCE was a united civil society voice in the World Education Forum in Dakar 2000 which set the Education for All agenda for 2015. Thousands of people all over 100 countries join a call for education to make sure that all sectors, governments, and international institutions are participating to achieve the Agenda's goals signed at the World Education Forums in Dakar. Education for all plays a central part in this campaign and it calls for expanding early childhood care & education, providing free & compulsory primary education for all, promoting learning & life skills for young people & adults, increase adult literacy by 50% and achieve gender equality by 2015 and improve the quality of education.

Moreover, the Action Week of the campaign enlightens the Education Quality facts for the concerned governments and reminds them to the Global Adherence towards Education for All, challenges, necessity to deal with them and to follow up with strict measures to solve them, such as legal amendments, public policies and strategies and developing the necessary institutional mechanism.

Different civil society institutions, organizations, associations, illiteracy centers and schools all over Jordan are working on a number of various activities as a participation in the GCE. According to the development index for Education for All, Jordan took a rank (45) out of (122) country that is measured by taking the average of primary education, Gender Equality, continuity average till the 5th grade and adults' literacy average.

Jordan is one of the closest eight Middle East countries that fulfills the comprehensive elementary education goal as the entering school levels remained constant throughout the last decades with more than 90%. Whereas, Dropping out from schools among students is not high in the four primary grades, but it rises when you go up until you reach the highest level in the secondary grades. Dropping out levels are considered to be higher among male schools, but in 1999-2000, the average remains constantly 80% without differences between boys & girls.



Literacy is remarkable in Jordan; it reaches 90% in 2004 and decreases among women & in the rural areas. Furthermore, Jordan has acquired a noticeable process in achieving Education for All goals. According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS) , Jordan is considered one of the advanced countries that illiteracy percentage for people aged older than (15 years) decreased in 2008 to be (7.7%) from (88%) in 1952 and from (33.5%) in 1979. Moreover, more than half of illiterates are over (60 years) and women illiteracy is still higher percentage in comparison to men. As for the lowest illiteracy percentage among the kingdom, the capital Amman has registered (5.8%), whereas Mafraq in the north registered the highest percentage (14.4%).

Furthermore, the latest report of the World Bank named “The Non Followed Path” for Educational standards in Jordan issued by the World Bank said that countries as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Tunis has specifically strive earnestly in providing education to both genders & adjusting educations quality & adequacy. Although they acquired these achievements, the sixth report issued by the development department in the region said that Arabic countries have to do more efforts to improve the quality of education.

Poverty is one of illiteracy reasons in Jordan. As a matter of fact, in 13 areas, out of 73 recognized as extreme poverty areas mostly in Badia, people do not send their children to schools in order to help them to improve their income. In addition parents in the rural areas avoid letting girls go to schools because they are very far from their houses whereas boys can continue their studying under this condition.

In addition to, due to the insufficient training on gender issue for schoolteachers and headmasters, the traditional roles for males and females remain unchanged and even the teaching techniques reinforce them which affect female students badly.

Secondly, the basic influence on illiteracy lays on the lacking of entertainment centers, gymnastic and encouraging non-academic centers, enhancing the non-academic talents, the insufficient student representatives in schools to meet their needs, low participation in making important educational decisions, early marriage and dropping out from school.

The Big Read campaign is the path that enables communities to raise people’s awareness, affect its attitudes and develop his communication skills to empower them to master reading, writing, calculating, Information Technology, computer knowledge in addition to self esteem and trust.

The campaign, this year, would like to reach all who are over 15 years old and have not the chance to continue their education to get good quality and public education and to encourage them to join illiteracy programs and education especially for women and for those who are in the rural areas to cover all Jordan. Moreover, governments in cooperation with civil society associations has to undertake the challenge to reach 5% in 2015 through relying on a national strategy for informal education that focuses on updating programs and partnership with civil societies.

Besides, the campaign aims to raise youth and adults education programs and enhancing it, as well as finding productive environment that enables individuals to achieve their goals and to develop their knowledge.



Finally, the campaign focuses on the importance of implementing the recommendations that stressed on developing and carrying out post illiteracy programs within informal education programs which match people's capabilities & ambitions in the context of continuous and parallel formal education such as follow up programs, and evening & summer educational centers. In addition, improving the quality of education by developing the teaching techniques which begin with and focus on the importance of the student. Also, to erase the typical and stereotypes of gender in the curriculums & teaching techniques.

The campaign, also, focuses on the important role of schools of interact with local community and to activate students and parents' councils and dialogue clubs among students in order to acquire more communication skills and to know how to deal with the issues concerning their schools and communities in general.

Women challenging the impact of sectarian violence amidst lack of governmental capacity to provide basic needs.

Baghdad – Mohammad Aljabouri

Um Ahmad wakes up early morning to prepare breakfast for her four little children before heading to her work to provide for her family, after she lost her husband. She is, now, responsible for the family and for ensuring that her children continue going to school in spite of all suffering her family had gone through. The case of Um Ahmad is one among other thousands of cases which left hundreds of widowers and divorced women living in difficult situation with the absence of protection of their rights. Um Ahmad says: 'since the latest violence erupted in the Iraqi society, an armed group killed my husband based on our sect. Accordingly, we were forced out of our residential area seeking refuge in another place to make sure that my four children are safe. We left everything behind to save our lives.'



Iraq has witnessed massive violent attacks resulting in hundreds of deaths due to the control of the militias on certain areas depending on the sectarian at that time. They divided Baghdad into sectarian neighborhoods (Sunni and Shi'ets). This sectarian division was reinforced by the US troops when they built the concrete walls for the purpose of further separation and obstruction of the movement of armed men in neighborhoods. Statistics estimate the number of widowers and divorced women to approximately two million inside Iraq.



In a small sewing workshop located in Karada area in Baghdad, Um Ahmad sits next to other woman each with her own story. Um Ahmad continues: “I have been working here for six months now. We get paid on a monthly basis which isn’t much, but it is enough to cover some of my children’s needs. I receive a low wage of 300 thousand Iraqi Dinars; equals 250 USD. As I said, I had no other choice but to seek work for various reasons. The first reason is that I can’t go back to my old house due to the armed threats, so now I live in a rented flat and I have to pay the monthly rent which we managed to obtain with the support of Municipality Council in this area. I am not alone in this, there are many families who sought refuge in this area and received the support of the local authorities”. Um Ahmad adds:” as for the level of rights, I have to be honest that we have not received any attention from government resources although there are continuous calls to compensate the internally displaced or support the widowers, but these are only talks and we haven’t received any concrete thing at all”.

The Iraqi government emphasized many times that it will allocate one million Iraqi Dinars (800\$) for each displaced families. This amount is considered very low by the families for a compensation for their suffering and leaving their houses as a result of armed groups’ threats. Their houses were either blown up, burned, or just seized by others and they were warned not to come back or they will face death.

Ms. Intisar Alali, a member of the Internally Displaced Committee at the Iraqi Parliament, states that the committee always calls for allocating monthly salaries for the displaced especially the women who have no supporter.

The committee continues to follow up on this issue despite the obstacles placed by some others. Ms. Alali notes that the allocation of this monthly stipend is only the first step towards supporting the displaced families. Later, a proposal will be submitted for the purpose of allocating residential land for the families who lost their houses and unable to go back to their houses.

When asked about the procedures followed by the Ministry of the Displaced, Ms. Alali indicated that the Ministry is still suffering from bureaucratic procedures and this has deprived many families of many rights, in addition to the fact that those procedures pushed other families away due to discouraging procedures and behavior of employees at the Ministry which gave the impression that the displaced people can’t receive the compensation allocated for them by the Iraqi government (one million Iraqi Dinars).

In addition to Um Ahmad, another woman who works at a food processing workshop (Zahra’a Kazem) tells her story: ‘I came here to support myself. I feel happy to be standing next to other women, working and challenging circumstances we passed through to produce something of our own making then sell it to nutrition shops and supermarkets and provide a small monthly income for ourselves. Zahra adds: ‘we make the famous Iraqi kubbeh as home-made product, this is why this product was appealing and on demand as told by the workshop management. This is so encouraging for us.’

Zahra continues her story: 'I got married 4 years ago and I used to live at Alfadl area. We had a baby girl and I lived a happy life although we lacked other things, but having my baby girl and my husband next to me meant the whole world for me. However, after the sectarian violence escalated my husband's family started to treat me differently and harshly as I am a Shi'et and they are Sunni. I, also, noticed that my husband became cruel to me, more and more every day until the moment came, and my husband kicked me out of the house based on my sect and he kept my daughter with him. He threatened he would kill me if I try to contact them. I went to my mother, who is married to another man, not my father. I felt strange there. This is why I found a job as an opportunity to get rid of the burdens that stand heavy on my shoulders. I don't know if the day will come when I will see my daughter again; and this worries me a lot.'

Um Ahmad has called on all authorities and concerned parties to provide real guarantees and support for displaced families and provide descent lives for them, especially widowers and divorced women. She adds: 'after losing our husbands and homes to violence, special allocations should be made for us to meet the basic needs of our families. Or alternative housing should be provided instead of the participated team of homes. The Iraqi government has made lots of promises in this regard; this is why we hope that those promises will transfer into reality at least to reserve the life and future of our children.'



Chief Editor

Mohammad Abdulla Alsayeh- Iraq

Media Committee Coordinator

Arwa Khadr El Boraei - Egypt

Communication & Media Team

Kawkab AL-Wadei- Yemen
Ghassan Saleh- Iraq

Administrative Officer

Noor Zada- Jordan

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Sharif Nasser Bin Jameel Str., Wadi-Saqra, Building no. 47

Tel.: 00962-6-5560497, Fax: 00962-6-5560913

Mobile: 00962-79-9996771

P.O. Box: 4775 Postal Code 11953 Tela' Ali, Amman- Jordan

Fotouh.younes@gmail.com, fyounes@equitas.org

