

## It is not More Women in Leadership that will Lift Women from Oppression but a Sincere Global Leadership that Truly Cares for their Dignity and Needs

### News:

The 8<sup>th</sup> of March this year marked the 110<sup>th</sup> International Women's Day (IWD). It is a day on which many organisations and individuals try to raise awareness about the many struggles and problems facing women globally, and to call for greater gender parity in political, economic and social life. For 2021, the UN announced its theme for IWD as: "*Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a Covid-19 World.*" More than a century after the celebration of the first IWD in 1911, the problems plaguing women are dire, including enduring crippling levels of poverty and violence; dismal access to good quality education and health care, and suffering political oppression and slaughter under tyrant regimes, and brutal occupations and colonial wars. Furthermore, despite decades of calls for and implementation of a plethora of gender equality policies, conventions, and laws, including getting more women into parliament and positions of leadership within societies, today, millions of women globally are fighting for basic rights and protections.

### Comment:

One in three women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence (World Health Organisation); half of the population of the world (3.4 billion people) which includes millions of women are struggling to meet basic needs (World Bank); half of the world's population lacks access to essential health services (World Economic Forum); and 132 million girls globally are out of school (UNICEF). All this is a damning indictment of all feminist strategies to create real improvement in the lives of millions of women globally. This is not surprising since feminism's myopic view of human problems reduces everything to a lack of gender equality within states or inadequate numbers of women in leadership positions rather than recognising that these intractable problems are a consequence of capitalist, socialist and other man-made systems which are bereft of any clear vision or sound solutions to preserve the dignity and guarantee the true human needs of women. Rather, such systems proceed through trial-and-error policies to try and address the issues of their societies which often worsens the lives of women.

Furthermore, how exactly will propelling women into particular positions of leadership, even to head of state, improve the lives of the millions of women within those societies, while the systems in those lands are rotten and corrupt to the core, and have proven unable or unwilling to protect women from violence, to create prosperity which benefits all, and to build successful and well-funded education and health care systems to secure the educational aspirations and health care needs of all women and girls? Bangladesh as an example has essentially been ruled by a female prime minister for the last 30 years (Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia), interspersed with a handful of short stints in power by male leaders. However, Bangladesh today is hardly a paradise for women. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of statistics, 70% of women in the country have suffered some form of abuse. Furthermore, the country is notorious for high levels of economic and sexual exploitation of women. In Rwanda, women have outnumbered men within its parliament for over a decade. Currently,

over 60% of its MP's are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union). However, 62% of female-headed households in the country lie below the poverty line (International Research Journals). South Africa has had high numbers of female parliamentarians for many years (42% of its parliament). Yet the country has come to be known as the 'rape capital of the world' due to its high levels of sexual violence against women.

All this is clear proof that the problems of women are not rooted in a lack of women in leadership roles. Having women in such positions may elevate the financial status of those handful of women, but it definitely does not translate into elevating the dignity and creating real positive change for the masses of ordinary women.

Furthermore, what the masses of women desire within states globally is not positions of leadership, but rather a system that can provide them a dignified standard of living, good quality education and health care, the ability to account and elect their ruler without fear, and a safe and respectful environment at work, home and in the general society, free from harassment, violence and other crimes. Which other system, other than the System of the Lord of the Worlds, the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, the All-Aware can provide this: the Islamic system of the Khilafah? Allah (swt) says: ﴿أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ﴾ **“Does He Who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?”** [Al-Mulk: 14]. History is evidence enough of how women under the Islamic rule of the Khilafah (Caliphate) enjoyed security, protection of their honour, prosperity and access to first-class education and health care institutions and facilities. Indeed, it was a state which revolutionised the high status, privileges, and protections afforded to women and was the envy of other nations. Lady Craven, a British traveller and author, wrote regarding the status of women in the Uthmani Khilafah in her book, 'A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople': *“The Turks in their conduct towards our sex are an example to all other nations... - and I think them (Turkish women) in their manner of living, capable of being the happiest creatures breathing.”*

Therefore, instead of recycling failed and flawed feminist strategies for change, IWD should surely give reflection for the need to establish an alternative political model and sincere global leadership: the Khilafah based upon the Prophethood, that truly cares for the dignity and wellbeing of women and carries sound solutions to the plethora of problems that they face.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by**

**Dr. Nazreen Nawaz**

**Director of the Women's Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir**