

FEMINISTS POSITION ON THE SANCTIONS OF IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

This paper basically talks about the Iraqi women's position in social, economic, and political life in the period of sanctions era, when the United States of America and United Nations imposed sanctions on Iraq. It also discusses how women declined from their position for economic crisis and how women faced insecurity and discrimination in that particular time from all sides. This also mention about what were the government policies for the protection of women, how feminist movement came into Iraq and what was its impact for the protection of women from all kinds of discrimination. This paper also discussed the situation of women and their relations with society and state in that particular time.

KEYWORDS: Discrimination, Iraq, Women's Right, Sanctions, Government Policies, Society, Polity, Economy

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a movement which came into exists for the protection of women from all kinds of discrimination. Feminism introduced in international relations lately in 1980s. In the context of international relations feminists want women's security and safety in national as well as international level. Feminists always look what kind of discriminations is going on against women and what are the policies for women security and safety, what is the participation of women in society, economy and polity. In 1991, Iraq invaded and conquered Kuwait, claiming a right to Kuwait territory. The United Nations declared Iraq's invasion illegal and ultimately used military force to eject Iraq from Kuwait. This is called the First Gulf War. United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 left Iraq under a strict import and export embargo. From that sanctions time Iraqi economy becoming down and down. The Iraq-Iran war of 1980-88 largely effect on Iraqi economy that ultimately resulted the declining of women's position in Iraqi polity, economy and society. Women were largely suffered and they were the main victims in the sanction time.

IRAQI WOMEN'S SITUATION IN 1990'S

This study basically shows the women's condition of Iraq in the sanctions period of 1990s. If we see the pre war time of Iraq, women's position on society, economy and polity was better in compare to the sanctions era of 1990s. In the time of economic sanction, Iraqi women's position and gender relations have changed in the context of political repression under the Baath regime, changing state policies towards women. Many Iraqi women refugees had left the country during the 1990s. In the time of 1990s there are basically two movement emerged in Iraq. In one side 'Anti-Sanctions Movement' and on the other side 'Feminist Movement' (Al Ali). The main idea of the Sanction was to destroy the dictatorial Saddam Husain's regime. French, Russia and many other countries were against the sanctions and many country wanted to over through dictatorial Saddam Husain's regime. Finally in 2003 America and England invaded Iraq and over through Saddam's regime. In the time of sanctions women's conditions becoming very diastral. Women losses their jobs and

shifted to home as household. Iraq converted from a rich country to third poorest country in the world in 2000. United Nations Security Council allowed limited oil export and ‘Oil for Food Program’. But it did not meet the basic needs of Iraqi citizens. That time women largely suffer healthcare issues, lack of vitamins child mortality rates increased. It is estimated that the sanctions lead to the deaths about one million, half of them children and 30 per cent women (Muller and Muller). Criminal activities were increased and women suffer more than their counterpart male. Iraqi Government policies towards women were decreased largely. The economic sanction breakdown the welfare state system of Iraq and largely effected on women, who had been its main beneficiaries. State discourse and policies as well as social attitudes and gender ideologies shifted dramatically during the sanctions period. Dramatically increased child mortality rates, widespread malnutrition, deteriorating health care and general infrastructure as well as unprecedented poverty and an economic crisis—women particularly were hit by a changing social climate (Al Ali). Many feminist scholars argued that the position of women in society and relations between men and women were abnormal during sanctions time. At that time Saddam Husain pressured women, to produce more children-ideally five children, and contribute to the war effort by providing future generations of Iraqi soldiers. Iraqi men were encouraged to divorce their ‘Iranian wives’ during the war with Iran (1980s). On the other hand, Iraqi Arab men were encouraged to marry Kurdish women as part of the regime’s Arabization policies in the northern part of Iraq (Iraqi Foundation).

In the period 1990s the militarization of society seriously affected women, families and gender relations, not only in terms of the loss of loved ones, but in terms of a deteriorating economy, changing government policies, shifting norms, and increasingly conservative values surrounding women and gender. That time a radical shift took place in terms of women’s diminishing participation in the labor force, restricted access to education, inadequate healthcare and other social services. Women were increasingly pushed back into their homes as unemployment rates increased. As the report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2000, women’s employment rate fell 23% to 10% in 1991 to 1997. Women’s salaries were also decreased in that time. Teenage girls and young women were frequently referred to the changes related to socializing, family ties and relations between neighbors and friends. Dramatically changes with respect to women’s position in society, social values and living conditions in 1990s. Many Iraqi women referred the sanction period were a ‘nostalgic’ era. In American invasion time thousands of children, women and men were died. Many women’s organizations and activists inside Iraq have documented the increasing attacks on women, the pressure to conform to certain dress codes, the restrictions in movement and behavior, the incidents of acid thrown into women’s faces and even the killings. George Bush and Tony Blair tried to co-opt the language of democracy and human rights, especially women’s rights. Nadjie Al Ali a prominent feminist Scholar in her famous work ‘Iraqi Women’ (2007), mentioned about the condition of Iraqi women in the time of 1990s. An NGO of Iraq documented a record that thousands of civilians already have been killed and maimed through numerous conventional and unconventional weapons. American and British troops have been involved in the systematic torture of prisoners and committed other violations of international human rights conventions and humanitarian law.

In the period of sanctions, there were many women organization emerged for the protection of women from various discrimination, but they not successes fully. In 2000, many British women organized movement as “Act Together: Woman against the sanction of Iraq”. Nicola Pratt and Nadjie Al Ali in their famous work “What Kind of Liberation: Women and the Occupation of Iraq” (2009), basically discussed how women in Iraq have fared since the Baath regime’s 2003 fall. Official rhetoric puts Iraqi women at centre stage, but they shown that in reality women’s rights and women’s

lives have been exploited in the name of competing political agendas. If we look at Iraqi women's historical participation in public life, their achievements in education, their contribution to the work force and the overall social climate, we find that in many ways, women's conditions were actually better in the past than now. A Sawsan a prominent feminist from England was supporter of the American and England's invasion of Iraq in 2003, but she changed her mind by 2006 and said "I had so much hope in 2003. I thought the Americans and the British will make sure that women's rights will be protected. We worked so hard despite difficulties from the very beginning." After war the situation was also more chaotic. Terrorists control the streets and the Americans only watch. Women were targeted; especially those who have a public profile (Al-Ali & Pratt). Miriam H. is an activist in a women's project in Baghdad said, 'We do not have a choice but to engage with the process. It is a reality whether we like it or not. But I have to admit we have spent most of the time campaigning and demonstrating against the way this process has taken place so far. One of our main objections is the exclusion of women and the incompetence of people involved' (Al-Ali & Pratt). Another woman activist lamented the fact that the Iraqi women's movement has been unable to develop its capacity and focus on the real needs and issues, given how the political process was imposed. Nicola Pratt and Nadje Al Ali in their famous work 'Women & War in the Middle East: Transnational Perspectives' (2009), built the respective empirical and theoretical work on Iraq and also included Palestine as another case study to explore the transnational dimensions of war and gender in the Middle East. So from the above study we may say that the condition of women in Iraq during the war period was more fearful and their life was danger.

CONCLUSIONS

So from the above discussion we may conclude that really the conditions of women were very fearful and dangerous on public life in the sanction time. Women were main victims and they were targeted. The policies of government were decreased towards women needs. The situation was like the ruler and the subject. Many women's organization referred the sanctions era as nostalgic period. Many well settled people become refugee and many of them left the country for the sake of their life. The welfare system of state was disintegrated due to economic crisis and women were the main beneficiaries of the welfare system. Violence was widely held against women. From all perspective women largely suffered and feel insecure in that time from society as well as state.

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