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Muslim World and Situation of Women in Muslim Societies

1. Background:

The Global Gender Gap (GGG) Report 2007 surveyed a total of 128 countries to develop a comprehensive and scientific index on how women were being treated in those countries. The GGG Index is based on four different sub-indices--namely, economic participation, educational attainment, political empowerment and health--while each of the sub-indices has half a dozen components.

According to the GGG, the planet's ten-worst offenders are: Yemen, Chad, Pakistan, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Benin, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt and Oman. Of the ten, nine are Muslim-majority states. At the other end of the spectrum, the planet's best countries for women to live in are: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Philippines, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and Spain. Not even one of the top-ten is a Muslim-majority state.

2. Present Situation and Analysis:

For women, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan comes out as one the worst of countries to live in; there are only two other countries worse off than is Pakistan -- Yemen and Chad. Under economic participation, Pakistan is ranked 126 out of 128. Educational attainment, 123 out of 128. Health, 121 out of 128. Political empowerment, 43 out of 128. Surprisingly, Pakistani women are worse off this year than they were last year.

Under economic participation, five of the worst-offenders are: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Oman and Bahrain. Under educational attainment, the worst-offenders are: Chad, Yemen, Benin and Pakistan. The best: Denmark, United Kingdom, Australia, France and Belgium. Under political empowerment the worst are: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt and Iran. The best: Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Spain.

Al Mamlakah al Arabiyah as Suudiyah, or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is ranked really low, too. Under economic participation, Saudi Arabia is ranked 127 out of 128. Educational attainment, 87 out of 128. Health, 60 out of 128. Political empowerment, 128 out of 128.

Al Jumhuriyah al Yamaniyah, or the Republic of Yemen is worse than both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Under economic participation, Yemen is ranked 128 out

of 128. Educational attainment, 127 out of 128. Political empowerment, 127 out of 128.

Intriguingly, there is a correlation between poverty and status of women. Some of the worst offenders are also the poorest of the poor (with the exception of oil wealth). Yes, there are a few exceptions. The UAE, for instance, has invested massive resources into educating its women. Bahrain now has a woman parliamentarian.

On March 25, 1940, Quaid-e-Azam gave a speech at Islamia College. The Quaid said: "I have always maintained that no nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with the men. No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men..."

On March 10, 1944, the Quaid addressed a meeting of the Muslim University Union (Aligarh). The Quaid said: "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life."

Muslims are 22 per cent of humanity but produce less than five per cent of global GDP. Imagine; 95 per cent of global GDP is produced by non-Muslims. Is it because Muslims are letting 50 per cent of their brain capacity go to waste?

3. Recommendations:

Keeping the situation of women in Pakistan, CRSS strongly recommends the following:

1. The government must abolish all discriminatory laws against women via democratic means, so that a Grand National consensus is ensured.
2. National Commission on Status of Women must be empowered with financial and administrative autonomy.
3. Gender Crimes Cell, under the Ministry of Interior, should be expanded to all the provinces where issues of Pakistani women could be quickly and aptly addressed.

Most of the Arab world is far below global averages and conditions, unfortunately, are actually deteriorating -- not improving.

4. The government must ensure to establish trauma-relief and distress centers to facilitate women victims of violence of any form or shape.
5. Pakistan must implement in letter and spirit the UN Conventions, regarding the conditions of women, which it has signed.
6. There must be a long term and institutionalized policy to keep encouraging women to participate in bigger numbers in the national mainstreams in all walks of life.