

## **Following the Sit-in**

The Sit-In that we've organized on July 19th in Al-Ferdaws sq was marvelous. Despite the fiery heat and the deteriorating security situation, brave women from different governorates have taken the initiative to raise their voices demanding to ensure women's rights and equality in the constitution and protesting against the attempt to marginalize the role of women and their human rights as well as the role of the civil society orgs in the process of writing constitution .

We stand there for three hours raising our demands and meeting with media and distributing flyers and posters to people in the street. During that, a small group of women appeared in the street holding banners and slogans against "absolute" equality of women. They shouted slogans for Islam and Quora'an. One of them has clearly stated in an interview that they demand for Quora'an to be adopted as a constitution and for establishing an Islamic government. They stood for half an hour and left.

Anyhow, the successful sit-in has inspired us to widen our campaign to involve men and women together in supporting our just demands.

In the afternoon, we met with the Drafting sub-committee of Chapter on Rights, Duties and Liberties. We submit to them the memorandum with several hundreds of signatures that we've collected from various cities within three days only. The discussion was open and hot especially on the points on: equality of women without any restriction, the special quota for women not less than 40 per cent in all decision making positions without link it with a limited time, the role of "Al-Ashayer"(tribe), the recognition of the international conventions and documents that Iraq has signed and ratified to be source for the Iraqi legislations without any conditions and the last which has heated the discussion was the issues of personal law to which the drafting committee trying to defend it's position that "the fellows of each religion or sect or thinking are free to abide by on issues concerning their personal status and believes.....". This was new formula they tried to present to us under the coverage of human rights and mix it with the right of practicing religious believes...We understand well the game . We've announced clearly that this Para will deepen sectarian in the society and creating division and damage to the unity of family. We firmly insisted that the Iraqi Personal Status Law which based in general on the best rules of Shariaa of different sects has united all Iraqis for five decade and protected the rights of women in marriage, divorce, custody..etc .

We've demanded to write a civic constitution for all Iraqis without any discrimination or distinguish with the aim to build the state of law, right, justice and equality. This means that we should recognize the state institution as the only body own the power to rule and not to create parallel religious and tribes powers. We've pointed out the international commitments of our country concerning human rights issues which should be reflected clearly in the constitution.

The meeting was over for a security reason due to the announcement of assassination of three members of the Drafting Committee from Sunni side.

In addition, I would like to draw your attention about the point on the role of Islam that in our memo we've proposed a para similar to para 7 in the Transitional Administrative Law which stated as following: "Islam is the official religion of the State and is to be considered a source of legislation. No law that contradicts the universally agreed tenets of Islam, the principles of democracy, or the rights cited in Chapter Two of this law may be enacted. This constitution respects the Islamic identity of the

majority of the Iraqi people and guarantees the full religious rights of all individuals to freedom of religious belief and practice ."

The sub-committee representatives told us that this formula has been accepted lately by the drafting committee. The role of Islam as a source of legislation or the "main" or the "only" source is always getting heat discussions.

We feel annoy with the statement given by Sheik Humam Hamoudi the Chair of the Drafting Constitutional Committee when he mentioned yesterday that the women who met with the constitutional committee were satisfied! It's not true. We're wondered that no one of the sub-committee members have taken notices of our proposals and suggestions. At the beginning of the meeting they tried to prevent us from reading our memo under the pretext of shortage of time! The meeting was held upon our request and we're astonished of a good number of Islamist women have been invited to attend it as an attempt to confuse the meeting. It was the first opportunity for us as representing active part of the civil society orgs to meet with the sub-drafting committee. We've expressed our worry about very short time behind the drafting committee to accomplish it's work in a close doors. We're still demanding for prolonging the dead line of writing the constitution in order to get the chance for Iraqi people to be involved actively in this very serious process .

We continue to be in touch with members of drafting committee lobbying for our demands and raising our voices through media and organizing a lot of meetings and workshops all over the country on the rights of women in the constitution extending awareness in society and especially among women .

**We should bring to your attention that before ten days ago, the Iraqi government has issued a degree that ensure a leave of 130 days with full salary for working woman in public sector after the death of her husband. This means the interpretation of Sharia that command woman to stay at home after the death of her husband and not to be in touch with outside world!**

We're think that quick international actions (letters to Drafting Committee, President, Prime Minister, UN bodies and US and UK policy makers) to support Iraqi women demands to ensure their equal rights are vital for building democracy and justice in Iraq. .

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