

Press Release

Beijing +20: Commemorating Gender Equality's Broken Promises for Women

This September marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) on women's empowerment and rights. It was the product of the 4th World Conference on Women held in China in 1995, which was attended by 17,000 participants and 30,000 activists. The Beijing Declaration and PFA was an extensive 400-point document adopted by 189 states, including dozens of Muslim countries. It set strategic objectives to improve the lives of women through advancing gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern such as poverty; violence; economic, educational and human rights; armed conflict; and power and decision-making. The UN described it as, "a visionary roadmap for women's rights and empowerment" and "...the most comprehensive global policy framework and blue print for action...to realize gender equality and the human rights of women and girls everywhere." However, 2 decades on, its promises to women lie in ruins, in a field of broken pledges and hopes. Today, despite 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Declaration, and despite 143 countries in the world enshrining gender equality in their constitutions, 1 in 3 women globally suffer physical or sexual violence; 70% of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty are women and children; 700 million women lack adequate food, water, sanitation, healthcare, or education; 85 million girls worldwide are unable to attend school and around 493 million women are illiterate; and of the 60 million people forcibly displaced from their homes due to persecution and conflicts as in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the vast majority are women and children.

This spectacular failure of the Beijing Declaration, PFA, CEDAW and all other international and national gender equality laws and conventions to deliver on their promises to women, is the result of secularism and feminism's flawed philosophy for change, which approaches the solving of women's problems from a gender perspective, with the belief that they will be solved by ensuring more gender equality within societies. This delusionary idea that simply equalizing rights and roles between the genders will secure respect, security, prosperity, and a good standard of living for women serves as a great injustice to women and girls. This is because it diverts attention from addressing the root cause of the severe oppression, poverty, and deprivation of basic rights that millions of women are subjected to today – which is destructive capitalist secular system that has dominated the politics and economics of states globally over the last century. This system has crippled economies, generated mass poverty, caused the crumbling of education and healthcare services, and nurtured materialistic mentalities which place wealth accumulation over human dignity, encouraging the trafficking of women. Furthermore, its liberal personal and sexual freedoms which encourage men to act on their own whims and desires, has fuelled violence, sexual harassment, and rapes against women. In addition, capitalist governments have supported dictatorships and acts of genocides for the sake of selfish interests, as well as pursued countless colonial wars across the world – all of which has caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of women and created a huge exodus of refugees from various lands.

Over the last year, the UN has run an international campaign to renew the commitment of states to the 'gender equality' based objectives of the Beijing Declaration, even announcing its vision of achieving 'Planet 50:50 before 2030'. However by blindly replicating its same failed gender-based method for change while also continuing to celebrate the capitalist secular system, it is simply engaging women in a fruitless never-ending struggle for their rights and setting them up for more decades of false hopes and broken promises. The serial failure of countless international conventions to ensure a better life for women is proof enough that such futile agreements will never deliver real change for women. We in the Women's Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir will therefore be running a campaign this September to highlight the failures of the Beijing Declaration and its 'gender equality' basis for change, as well as to present the Islamic ideology, implemented by the Khilafah based upon the method of the Prophethood, Inshallah, as the only state that enjoys a truly credible policy framework and a comprehensive blueprint to guarantee security, rights, and good lives for women.

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