



**Under the Patronage of His Excellency the Prime
Minister Dr. Omar Al-Razzaz**

***On the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the
UDHR***

Final Ceremony

**Speech by Commissioner-General of the National Center for Human
Rights**

His Excellency Dr. Musa Braizat

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The international community was convinced that oppression, despotism and denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms were main reasons for the deadly wars and internecine conflicts that, for centuries, afflicted nations and societies, worldwide. Therefore, UN was created in 1945 for the purpose of establishing and maintaining world peace on the basis of justice, harmony and cooperation among nations. However, the UN charter missed the important principle of defining the human rights that peoples were aspiring for and assigning to them the status they deserve. Thus UDHR was drafted to compensate for this vital aspect which alluded the UN charter. Then these universal norms and principles became a driving force for states' constitutions that were drafted after this Declaration was approved by the UNGA drew on its substantive, universally, and accepted principles. Further, two international conventions were negotiated and adopted later on stating in more details the general and important concepts of the declaration; together these three documents constitute what is now described as 'universal bill of rights'. Jordan is a party to these two important international conventions.

The core principles of UDHR include:

(a) recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of the person, (b) guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination as the foundation of freedom and peace, (c) emphasizing that disregard of human rights led in the past to barbaric acts which hurt human conscience ('Arab Spring' revolts and protests are only recent examples of the negative effects of such oppression and injustices, endured by Arab peoples in the post and colonial era known as national independence period! at the hands of mostly non-democratic and oppressive regimes!) (d) the ultimate goal which people aspires to is the emergence of a world in which the individual would enjoy freedom of speech and belief; and being free from fear and want.

UDHR emphasizes the right of all people to equality, non-discrimination, and not to be subjected to torture, inhumane and ill-treated, and the right

to education including technical and professional education which should be provided equally and on merit basis. Among the fundamental freedoms the declaration upholds are: freedom of expression, free movement, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of believe and thought as well as religious freedoms.

Freedom of expression is very vital for the person, state and society, likewise the declaration does not ignore individual's responsibility for the society in which he lives and which allows for the full and free realization of his/her personality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To what extent these rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed for Jordanians?

The answer to this question is of twofold. Firstly, Jordanian constitution guarantees most of these rights and freedoms in no unclear terms and H.M., the King instructed the government at the same time to review and implement the recommendations of the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) almost four years ago.. H.M. addressed in the same vein and for the same purpose, the judiciary consequently, former Prime Ministers issued repeated circulations to various ministries and governmental bodies demanding that they implement the said recommendations; which in all circumstances are consistent with Jordan's obligations, be those enunciated in the Constitution, or demanded by international agreements and treaties, ratified by the government. Further, a Comprehensive National Human Rights Plan was drafted and adopted in 2015. Most of these recommendations are echoed in the public demands that have been put forward by Jordanians who have taken to the street demanding reform and respect for human rights. Also every year hundreds of complaints are lodged with NCHR by citizens and individuals complaining from the non-implementation of such recommendations.

While we at (NCHR) acknowledge the fresh start by the current P.M. and his team, we share the feeling of frustration and anger prevailing in the country and society, alike.

Progress on political, social and economic reform is either lacking or going in the wrong direction: the new Tax Law and new amendments proposed to the Cybercrimes Law, as well as Crime Prevention Law and stories -founded or unfounded- of rampant corruption, especially within higher strata are only few examples of the causes of apprehension and worry which characterize the public mood nowadays.

More importantly there exists a gap between the Constitution and the laws drafted for the protection of citizens' human rights. Salient among such laws are: anti terror law, cyber crimes law, crimes prevention law, information law, associations law.

Explanatory reports which the General Government Coordinator has sporadically been issuing are short on substance and rich in rhetoric. Unfortunately, they have done little to change the general impression about the lack of substantive progress in the fulfilling Jordan's commitments; thus diminishing, rather than reinforcing the political, will which has been expressed by the royal instructions to the government to uphold the principles and norms of human rights.

Further, an improvisation like this would also be harmful to the Prime Minister's drive for reform, and if continued , would subtract from the reservoir of public confidence in the political system.

Finally, and more alarming, is that fact that little has been done by successive governments to tackle the political, social and economic structures that have remained an obstinate obstacle to achieving a real breakthrough and substantive progress in the upholding at least some of the ideals and lofty principles continued in UDHR, the international legal instrument which for seventy years has been inspiring peoples worldwide, including I dare to say Jordanians.