

**Statement by H.E. Dr. M. Javad Zarif
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran
at the 28th Session of the Human Rights Council
Geneva, March 2, 2015**

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. President,

When the founders of the United Nations established this Organization with the aim of saving the succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, they had the foresight and wisdom to realize that these lofty objectives could only be achieved through **combining** all efforts, **uniting** strength and rejecting coercion. They enshrined this cogent realization in various provisions of the Charter, in what amounts to articulation of a **duty to cooperate** in dealing with all issues of concern ranging from taking “effective **collective measures** for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace” to achieving “**international cooperation** ... in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights.”

In spite of momentous achievements of the Organization, the outdated paradigm of exclusion has managed to creep in, turning the **duty to cooperate** into **propensity to politicize**. The impact has

nowhere been more damaging than in the field of human rights. The almost uncontrollable compulsion to subjugate everything to political considerations left its indelible mark on institutions, procedures and even on concepts and principles, leading to an acute imbalance in interpretation, implementation and enforcement of human rights.

The prevalence of political manipulations, double standards and selectivity in the Commission on Human Rights and its special procedures was universally acknowledged, albeit for different reasons and in different instances by different countries and political persuasions. Selectivity and double standards are far more detrimental, when they infect concepts and principles. Take freedom of expression for instance. While racism and anti-Semitism are rightly condemned and even penalized, widespread instances of Islamophobia and blatant disregard for the values, beliefs and sanctities of Muslim **citizens** of many societies are not only tolerated, but even publicly glorified as freedom of expression. And we all see the catastrophic consequences.

Beyond the immediate and necessary action to denounce and condemn acts of verbal or physical violence, we all need to undertake a soul-searching exercise: Why quite a sizeable number of individuals and groups espousing extremist ideologies and engaged in acts of brutal terror and heinous violence, in Europe and on a much bigger scale in

Iraq and Syria, happen to be second generation citizens of “Western democracies.” It is frightening that Da’esh terrorists, beheading innocent civilians, speak European languages with native accent. The high rate of terrorist recruitments signify a systematic failure, which has led to marginalization, alienation and disenfranchisement of individuals and groups born, raised and educated in “Western democracies.”

Another related question needs to be raised and answered. How did these Organizations of Mass Murder evolve in the Middle East and North Africa? One explanation, which relates directly to the challenges faced by global efforts to promote and protect human rights, is noteworthy. These groups owe their inception and growth to the shortsightedly defined security and strategic interests of certain regional and global players, conveniently shrouded under the pretext of human rights. Make no mistake: the so called *Islamic State* of today – which is neither Islamic nor a state by the way – is composed of the so called freedom fighters of only a couple of years ago. Human rights were the disguise for a broad social, political and strategic engineering to transform the region and undermine governments deemed to be unfriendly.

The remedy to this tormenting situation should be of multiple levels. The most immediate and significant is the cognitive level. Our ideas, views, discourses and perspectives matter most.

We should abandon the exclusionist mentality of the cold war era, and genuinely absorb and accept the principle that all human beings are equal. We should, likewise, recognize that all human rights deserve to be promoted and respected in a balanced manner.

We must recognize that in a globalized world, zero-sum approaches produce negative-sum situations. A true belief in the common destiny of human being is the first step in this regard.

We should thus join hands to contain, control and defeat Islamophobia as well as extremisms of other varieties.

I firmly believe that in spite of all challenges, the United Nations is the most appropriate global setting with the capacity to produce ideas, procedures and space for consensus building. Iran's most recent contributions to this collective endeavor, which have been endorsed by the General Assembly, namely the Global Agenda on Dialogue Among Civilizations (A/Res/56/6) and the World Against Violence and Extremism (WAVE) (A/Res/68/127), represent our collective resolve to usher in a paradigm of inclusion, equal footing and cooperation.

On the political level, using human rights as an instrument of security policies should be shelved and selectivity and double standard should be abandoned. We really need this paradigm shift; not to an unknown paradigm but simply back to the principles of the Charter. May be it is too much to expect that the paradigm shift could begin

with global security or disarmament, however urgently needed. But we can certainly start with human rights by resisting the urge to politicize everything.

To this end and for the sake of credibility of global human rights, the gross and systematic violations of the human rights of the Palestinians by the Israeli regime should be terminated immediately and all resolutions of the Council in this regard should be implemented vigorously.

Our multilateral institutions also need reform, repair and adoption to the new realities of our globe. We are approaching the first decade of the establishment of the Human Rights Council. This Council has a mixed record. The Universal Periodic Review is indeed a positive one. It should be strengthened and its universal nature should be taken more seriously. The Council has also been able to deepen our understanding of the multidimensionality and diversity of human rights. Studies such as the impact of corruption on human rights, or the negative consequences of coercive measures are among other positive achievements.

I am hopeful, Mr. President, that we can move forward and build further on these achievements by foregoing our propensity to politicize for the sake of not only our duty, but in fact our unavoidable imperative, to cooperate.

