

KRG High Council of Women's Affairs

I. Establishment

The decision to establish the KRG High Council of Women's Affairs was issued on 14/12/2009 from the KRG Council of Ministers, as per paragraph 3 of Article 8 of the KRG Council of Ministers Law number 3 of 1992.

II. Structure

- The Prime Minister heads the Council, which includes six Ministers (Interior, Finance, Justice, Culture & Youth, Labor & Social Affairs, and Education).
- The Secretary-General is appointed by a Presidential decree (from the President of the Kurdistan Region) based on a request made by the Council of Ministers in November 2010.
- Seven activists in the field of women and civil society issues are appointed by a decision from the Council of Ministers. Membership is limited to four years and can be renewed once.

III. Objectives And functions of the Council as mentioned in the By-law:

- Proposal of the general policy with regard to women's constitutional and civil institutions.
- The mobilization of government institutions to support women to assume their role in all areas and aspects.
- Promote the concept of equality between women and men in all areas.
- Draw a realistic and a solid plan to develop women in the areas of education, health and employment.
- Activation of the constitutional articles that pertain to women's rights.

- Proposal of the establishment of institutions and centers for the treatment of women's issues in the journals of social, health, economic and education.
- Participation in commissions and committees constituted by the government and private issues and women's issues.
- Conducting of meetings, seminars, conferences and workshops to educate women and develop their capabilities and potentials.
- Work to make international treaties and resolutions part of the laws of the region and following up its implementation.
- Opening of a women's center to gather information on the situation of women's rights and the creation of quarterly and annual reports on the status of women in the region.
- Counseling of government institutions on women's issues, particularly regarding legislation related to women's issues.
- Advocacy for scientific studies and research on women's issues in universities and scientific centers.

IV. Projects and Programs of the High Council of Women's Affairs

The KRG High Council of Women's Affairs during a short period of time was able to perform a range of projects and programs and fixed them in the programs and policies of the institutions of the Region. Below is a summary of many of the policies and strategies prepared with the Council's contribution and the support of our partners from international and local organizations and specialists from within and outside the Region and institutions involved in the Region.

- Preparation and formulation of a five-year national strategy for combating violence against women with the support of international organizations and with the participation of international and local experts and civil society organizations and the consultation of all stakeholders in the region. After completing all of these steps, the strategy has been sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and has been approved by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and put into action by the concerned ministries. Sector plans were then

prepared for the four ministries of Education, Interior, Health, and Labor and Social Affairs at the preliminary stage.

- To activate the relevant laws related to women such as the personal status law amended in the Region and the law against domestic violence. The High Council for Women's Affairs via the contribution of the judiciary holds consultative meetings and workshops to discuss the obstacles that hinder the implementation of these laws and a number of solutions needed in this regard to continue these activities.
- Participation in the development of a number of plans regarding shelter for endangered and battered women. The plans were sent to the Prime Minister by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs for approval.
- A conference has been held on human rights curricula taught in schools of the Region through the contribution of the Ministry of Education and civil society organizations in order to activate this curriculum as a basic material. The Council is also involved with the Ministry of Education in many committees to develop policies and regulations, and modify and change some of the programs that are not in line with international standards, especially conventions of human rights and the rights of the child.
- Performing an extensive campaign at the Regional level under the supervision of the High Council of Women's Affairs and the participation of all concerned ministries and institutions in the region in connection with the International Day for Combating Violence Against Women (sixteen-day campaign) and the effective participation of civil society organizations, as more than 90 organizations participated in this campaign.
- The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in coordination with the High Council of Women's Affairs held a conference with the aim of re-organizing unified religious discourse, with the participation of concerned parties and women's organizations and civil society organizations. The conference ended with a set of recommendations to strengthen the bonds of love, harmony, non-violence, peace

and love in the community and spreading the culture of humanity to protect women from all forms of violence.

- Printing and publishing of a range of publications, including a set of laws and publications regarding UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- The Council is now in the process of preparing a national strategy for the development of women. After completion, it will be sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers for approval and put into action by all relevant institutions in the Region. This strategy contains all the issues that relate to the lives of women from all fields and levels, with the identification of gaps and obstacles and problems which hinder the process of development and the advancement of women for the better.
- The High Council of Women's Affairs is a member of the Supreme Committee for the follow-up and evaluation and analyses of international reports regarding the reality of Kurdish women, submitted to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to be considered and worked upon.
- Under the supervision of the Presidency of the High Council of Women's Affairs, a Committee was formed by a Supreme decision of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to prepare for a national conference to address the obstacles that hinder the application of the laws relating to women in the Kurdistan Region, with the support and contribution of the judiciary, experts, and international and local specialists. This conference is to be held on the International Day for Combating Violence against Women .
- The High Council of Women's Affairs through the participation of the syndicates of social workers and psychologists in the Region is conducting a field survey at the Regional level on the subject of FGM and how to determine the causes and treatment to reduce this phenomenon.
- The High Council of Women's Affairs continuously follows up and assesses the situation of women in the Region and promotes concerned institutions in this regard.

V. Developments and Indicators of Development

- Appointment and establishment of four special courts to domestic violence.
- The Presidency of the Council of Ministers endorsed the strategy of combating violence against women, and the recognition of its application by all relevant institutions in the territory.
- The Prime Minister decided to form a supreme committee to combat violence at the Regional level, forming committees at the provincial level under the chairmanship of the President of the Administrative Unit (Governor).
- The functions and powers of the General Directorate of Follow-up to Combat Violence Against Women were changed.
- The response and broad participation of all ministries and institutions in the International Day to Combat Violence Against Women at the level of districts, counties and villages, universities and schools were encouraged to spread the culture of peace and non-violence.
- The bill of the High Council of Women's Affairs was prepared and sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to be submitted to the Head of the Kurdistan Parliament.
- The quota system mandated that women constitute no less than thirty percent of parliamentary seats.
- The opening of the Judicial Institute accepted a satisfactory ratio of women.

VI. Obstacles and problems facing the issue of women and the needs of the Council:

- In spite of all these achievements and developments completed due to the work of the Council, one of the most important problems facing the work is the absence of a special law governing the work of the High Council of Women's Affairs. While there is no law to regulate matters of

the Council, the Council's By-law is suspended, and because of the absence of a special law the Council does not have any special budget but only a very small monthly payment allocated by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

- Most of the programs and projects prepared by the Council and recognized by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers are not fully implemented due to non-allocation of a special budget, which is why we do not see a significant impact on the reality of the lives of Kurdish women.