

Kuwait Declaration on the Rights of Elderly - An Islamic Perspective

In response to the urgent need of the Islamic Countries to accord due attention to the growing elderly category, promote their health, enable them to enjoy as much living conditions as possible

capitalize on their rich experience, knowledge and skills as well as the ideals and values they embrace and which embody their conduct and ethics; and inspired by the profound beliefs characterizing the Muslims of these Countries, whose religion is the

beacon guiding their lives; and to make use of the deeply- rooted health and social heritage of these countries; and to guard them against the materialistic development trend which focuses on the development of wealth rather than the development of human beings, where religious values decline, the humanity of man recede, the family's role as the adobe of society is endangered, family bonds disintegrate, individualism and selfishness prevail and disrespect of the elderly becomes the norm, the 12th Medical Juristic Symposium on the Rights of Elderly from an Islamic Perspective held in Kuwait on 18 thru 21 October 1999, adopts the following Declaration on the Rights of Elderly:

First: Human soul is invaluable and honoured by God, to sustain it is to sustain the mankind. Moral sustenance of Human soul -by securing dignified life thereto -is no less significant than immoral sustenance.

Second: Believers resemble a single body where any infliction of an organ would cause the rest of the body into sleeplessness and fever in response thereto. Caring for the aged, the weak the sick and the disable is a collective obligation on the entire society .Sinful are all members of the society someone fails to do the obligation.

Third: The elderly have rights that should be recognized and admitted by their communities.

Fourth: It is the right of any old person to have a good access to a permissible source of income so long as he/she is able to work even after the retirement age. The elderly must be enabled to serve himself if he/she can do so. They must be reassured that they are useful members of their society , in preservation of their dignity and psychological health and to benefit from their knowledge, wisdom and ethics, especially in the upbringing of their grandsons and granddaughters. Their wide experiences and advice can be utilized in making the state's policy and realizing its interests.

Fifth: Family is the nucleus of the Islamic society. The elderly have the right to enjoy family life among their children. If the elderly have no family to embrace them, the society has to create for them a familial atmosphere by securing a certain family to look after them assigning escorts to them, or living in a decent elderly houses.

Sixth: The aged have a prominent standing in their respective communities. No word of contempt must be uttered to them. They are to be treated decently and held in high esteem.

Seventh: Relatives, neighbours or companions have to visit the elderly when sick, call on them even if not sick and mitigate their feeling of loneliness. Good words are a charitable gift, showing cheerfulness in the elderly's presence is a charitable gift, guiding a poor-righted man is a charitable gift, giving a hand to the weak is a charitable gift and helping the mute or the deaf is a charitable gift.

Eighth: Awareness of the aged has to be enhanced as regards how they can preserve their health ward off diseases and accidents and how to take medicines. This is a call for righteousness which is the duty of every Muslim.

Ninth: An old person is to be helped if need be. He should be provided with food, clothing, lodging and medical care. He/she must be protected against any attack, since all Muslims are brothers and sisters in Islam, they must not treat unjustly or let down each other. Regulations and legislations are to be issued to serve this noble purpose.

Tenth: The Symposium calls on all international organizations, Governments, Voluntary and Non-governmental organizations and after civil society institutions to spare no effort in operationalizing elderly rights, especially in the following areas:

- a-** To set up an elderly care supreme council in all countries, in which all relevant bodies are represented. This council must have a full mandate of implementation.
- b-** To enact legislations securing the elderly rights and guaranteeing all health, psychological, social, economic and living care for them, including full health and social insurance for all segments of the elderly, as well as providing them with all facilities possible.
- c-** Civil society institutions have to do whatever necessary to care for the elderly and secure their physical and mental practices, especially establishing sport, social and cultural clubs, as well as help them find appropriate jobs.
- d-** To introduce audio-visual and print media which aims at raising awareness of the aged regarding how to defend their interests, providing necessary entertainment, and educating citizens, ever since the stage of childhood, on how to provide full care for the aged.
- e-** To insert subjects on elderly care and maintenance of their rights into several educational curriculae.
- f-** To conduct thematic and field researches aiming at identifying elderly status, needs and problems and working out solutions thereto.
- g-** To call on OIC and ISESCO in conjunction with IOMS to adopt and declare a document on rights of the elderly from an Islamic perspective.
- h-** IOMS has to issue a book on: "Islamic Ordinances" on worship, dealings and other Islamic ordinances related to the elderly.