

July 10th 2010

To the attention of the
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

From the **Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS)**, we ask you to guarantee in all circumstances the minority rights of the Al Tuwaiya people in Oman that have been carried out by the Omani Ministry of Interior, namely the Al Tuwaiya people the use of their name. Moreover, the consequence of this denial is to label the Al Tuwaiya people as servants of another tribe and thus attack their honor and reputation in the Omani context and to cause them to be discriminated against.

This case is almost four years old now. It goes back to May 2006 when the Omani ministry of interior, represented by the so-called committee for correction of tribes' names, proper names and nick names, has issued a discriminative order against the Al Tuwaiya people. The decision meant to change the Al Tuwaiya name to Al Harthy, a strong tribe in Oman. According to the Omani society beliefs, this means that those of Al Tuwaiya people who become Al Harthy are the servants of the latter.

Before May 2006, Al Tuwaiya people did not receive any notifications of the decision, nor from the ministry of interior neither from the mayors of their governorates, Al Qabil and Ibra, where many of them settle. They only came to know the matter through various discriminative situations they confronted at the police civil status departments where to renew IDs and passports, and issue birth certificates. Carelessly and rudely, police officers used to surprise Al Tuwaiya members every now and then by a renewed passport, an ID or a birthday certificate with a different tribal name written on them, i.e Al Harthy. It was clear then that that the Omani police received orders from the Ministry of Interior to change the real name of Al Tuwaiya. Al Tuwaiya members were, then, able to find a copy of the Ministry of Interior's discriminative order.

Consequently, they started to write letters to their mayors in Al Qabil and Ibra, to the Minister of Interior and several authorities and dignitary figure in the Omani government, requesting the cancellation of the decision. None of those troubled themselves to reply. Even when some members of Al Tuwaiya tried to meet the Minister of Interior, they were turned down. Over fifteen Omani officials have received Al Tuwaiya complaints.

Exhausting all local remedies and every attempt to restore their name and dignity, Al Tuwaiya members eventually raised the matter to international human rights treaties like the Arabic Committee for Human Rights in Paris and the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information in Cairo who both issued statements denying the discriminative order. They also contacted Amnesty International who supported

them through addressing the Omani ministry of foreign affairs in 2009 and 2010. A member of Al Tuwaiya family has been to some 3 Arabic countries in an attempt to get help from NGOs.

The Al Tuwaiya people have taken this case to the Omani Administrative Court in Muscat in 2007/2008 but to no avail as the Administrative Court took the side of the Ministry of Interior claiming that all decisions by this Ministry are of supreme authority that no court in the country can override. The Al Tuwaiya people have then appealed against the Administrative Court decision but again to no avail. In their defense of their basic rights, which was led by an Omani lawyer, The Al Tuwaiya people have demanded the Ministry of Interior to cancel its discriminative order and provide substantial proof of the cancellation. They have also requested the ministry to apologize to the Al Tuwaiya members after all the humiliations caused to them as a consequence of the ministry's biased decision to change their name. Several documents were submitted to the Admin Court documenting the financial and moral damages caused to the Al Tuwaiya people due to the Ministry's decision. Al Tuwaiya people have demanded compensations for those damages which have been very costly on their side. None of Al Tuwaiya's demands have been considered by the Admin court nor any other Omani authority.

Only in December 2009, the ministry of interior claimed verbally that it has "cancelled" its racial decision, but without notifying its victims officially or providing them with final written recession. Again, through police officers Al Tuwaiya people came to know about the "cancellation" which has been conducted haphazardly and in the most humiliating ways. Any person of Al Tuwaiya who wishes to renew an official document has to wait for hours in the police departments and has to go through various insulting steps to get his real name restored. Some of Al Tuwaiya members have failed to get their real names restored even though they have waited for a long time and have been to the several police departments that they were told to visit.

While many of Al Tuwaiya members are still not able to get back their real names despite of the order cancellation, the Ministry of Interior refuses to provide them with compensations to the damages it caused and continues to ignore their calls for official documents stating the cancellation of the order.

Since the 2006 it is still not clear where this matter is heading to and what might happen to the fate of Al Tuwaiya people in the future. It is of great importance to note here that an official in the Ministry of Interior has flatly said to some members of Al Tuwaiya that he along with his colleagues will try as much as they can to prevent them from writing their real names.

In the last few months it has become clear that the Ministry of Interior is not intending to cancel its order completely. Police officers at civil status departments continue to treat Al Tuwaiya members like second degree citizens whenever they have official documents need to be renewed or registered with their real name.

The main conclusion that can be drawn is therefore that damages resulted from that hateful decision of the Omani Ministry of Interior have aggravated physically and psychologically. Many victims are still being devastated by this discriminative order.

Many members of the tribe have refrained from getting married, having children, issuing new IDs and passports, traveling abroad, pursuing cars registration and other business deeds due to this racial order. There are also many of them who fear confessing their grave sufferance and damages lest they are persecuted by authorities. Furthermore, there is a considerable number of them studying and working abroad who possess international certificates, documents and drive licenses which hold their real tribal names for a long time ago. In case they are confronted with the change whether in their IDs or passports, their international documents will appear belonging to other people in the eyes of the countries they stay in, and this is an utmost forgery committed by the Omani Ministry of Interior along with the Omani Royal Police. How should the individuals continue their daily life through this minefield of humiliating experiences? How could they maintain dignity?

Having been utterly withdrawn from having a name by their own choice, they plead all human rights organizations and the free world to take every drastic action to protect them and support their case as it is a humane case. They have a strong faith on the civil community after they have exhausted every local remedy to get out of this dilemma.

Yours sincerely,

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