

THE ROLE OF ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC, formerly known as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference), established in 1969, is the second largest inter-governmental organisation after the United Nations, with 57 Member States including Palestinian Territories. In recent years, OIC has attempted to base its perception of human rights on customary documents, legally binding instruments and policy documents. These include the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, the OIC Ten Year Programme of Action and the Covenant of the Rights of the Child in Islam. The new Programme of Action includes a number of organisational changes, many of which have already been implemented.

This paper gives an overview of the OIC's human rights framework, perspectives and positions. In one hand, the universal human rights are primarily individual rights, whereas the "Islamic human rights" are a group of rights to which only Muslims are entitled (the primacy of Sharia). In the other hand there are signs of the OIC moving towards a universal conception of human rights, strengthening its participation in the international human rights system. Findings reported in this paper are based on a basic survey of official documents of OIC available in the public domain. Resolutions, declarations and official documents of OIC Islamic Summit Conferences and the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings as well as other OIC meetings and bodies were studied to understand OIC policies and positions on issues pertinent to OIC. The paper also argues that the establishment of a human rights commission constitutes an important step for the OIC, reflecting a new will to participate in international community, to reach out to member state populations and to allow for moderate voices within the OIC.

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