

Awareness drive to promote human rights set in Saudi Arabia

Arab News - 11 July, 2007

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Guidance, Endowments has agreed with the Human Rights Commission (HRC), Saudi Arabia's governmental human rights body, to begin an awareness campaign in the Kingdom to promote the ideals of human rights in the teachings of Islam.

According to the HRC, Minister of Islamic Affairs Sheikh Saleh Al-Asheikh, has agreed to the proposal made by HRC in an official letter sent to the ministry.

The campaign will focus on creating awareness among Saudis and residents in the Kingdom about the teachings of human rights in Islam through Islamic propagation (dawa) symposiums, training courses, as well as publishing brochures on human rights in Islam and distributing them in the Kingdom.

The awareness campaign will also include Friday sermons, as imams will take part in spreading the culture of human rights when they address Muslims on Friday in mosques.

Recently, Interior Minister Prince Naif summoned hundreds of imams and preachers in the Kingdom in a gathering held in the capital to stress the importance of combating extremist ideas via cultural means, such as Friday sermons.

The awareness campaign will also include the formation of a database within the ministry to register researchers with expertise in human rights, the HRC stated.

The HRC said the minister had also agreed to begin publishing booklets on the teachings of human rights in Islam, which will be distributed inside the Kingdom and abroad.

In addition, it said that the ministry would start preparing for symposiums that will be given by researchers in human rights teachings in Islam inside the Kingdom, as well as in several countries around the world.

"The recommendations of these local, regional, and international symposiums will be shared among researchers and ministry officials," the HRC stated.

Turki Al-Sudairi, chairman of the HRC, noted the importance of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Guidance, Endowment's strategic partnership with the rights body in spreading the culture of human rights in Saudi Arabia.

As part of its mission in Saudi Arabia, the HRC has contacted several ministries to ask for their support in implementing programs related to human rights in the country. Last month, the Ministry of Social Affairs had agreed to set up new centers to receive abuse cases in several cities of the Kingdom, based on a recommendation from HRC.

Al-Sudairi as well as board members of the HRC is scheduled to meet Interior Minister Prince Naif in his office in Jeddah on Saturday to update the prince on its activities in the Kingdom and to shed light on its collaborations with other ministries.

HRC officials will also mention to Prince Naif the obstacles the human rights body faces in the Kingdom in implementing its mission.