

## CHAPTER II

### **THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION'S IN HANDLING CONFLICTS**

The fundamental purpose of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Establishment (OIC) led the organization to create the peaceful world through helps and protects the Muslim and the Islamic States. Hence, this chapter will explain about the establishment of the organization, its purposes and also involvement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in maintaining peace by resolving conflicts.

#### **A. The Establishment of OIC**

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with 57 member states. This Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world —Asia (28), Africa (26), South America (2), and Europe (1) —and include countries with both Muslim-majority populations and non-Muslim-majority demographics. It endeavors to protect and secure the interface of the Muslim world within the soul of advancing worldwide peace and agreement among different individuals of the world.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was established in 1969, 25 September in Rabat, Morocco. Its foundations have been discussed since 1964, on Arab Summit that had been held in Mogadishu – Somalia. They made a concept of gathering Islamic States strength in international circumstances. In 1965, the Arab League Summit has been held in Jeddah – Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia brought the concept of gathering the Islamic States power to resist Zionism.

The spirit to actualize the concept expanded after the Middle East War against Israel in 1967 moreover when Israel burning down the Al – Aqsa Mosque on 21 August 1969. In

the next month, King Faisal as the representative of Arab Saudi and King Hassan II from Morocco has held the High Conference from 22 – 25 September 1969. The Conference also supported by Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Somalia, and Nigger.

In 1970 the first meeting of Islamic of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah. There was decided to establish the headquarters of The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and it was headed by Tunku Abdul Rahman as the representative of Malaysia. Today, key member-states that provide the executive and administrative, intellectual, financial, and personnel support that sustains the OIC are Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan.

In 1970 the first ever meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah which decided to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah headed by the organization's secretary general. The primary OIC Constitution was received by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Constitution laid down the targets and standards of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States.

Over the last 40 years, the participation has developed from its founding members of 30 to 57 states. The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled across the world. The present Charter of the OIC was embraced by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar on 13-14 Walk 2008 to become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century.

## **B. The Purpose of Organization of Islamic Cooperation**

The current Secretary General of the OIC's Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, a Turkish academic and career diplomat serving his second, consecutive term in the post (2005-2014). The Secretary General implements all decisions of the two main OIC organs: the Islamic Summit (a meeting every three years attended by monarchs and heads of state)

makes all policies designed to achieve the goals of the OIC Charter and the considers issues of concern for member states and the world Muslim community; the Council of Foreign Ministers (an annual meeting of Foreign Ministers of OIC member-states) reviews progress on OIC strategic planning and policies, and adopts policy resolutions.

*“The OIC’s core mission is to “galvanize the Ummah into a unified body” to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation of the universal community of Muslims through political, economic, and social initiatives. All OIC Charter declares that all member-states are committed to “the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 1969).”*

Under the rubric of “modernization and moderation, “Sec. Gen. Ihsanoglu has led a significant expansion in the vision and activities of the OIC, based on the passage in 2005 of a Ten-Year Program of Action for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TYAP) and the adoption of a revised OIC Charter. Accordingly, there has been a significant uptick in OIC activities in UN for a European Union (EU) bodies, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), along with the strategic growth in OIC presence and activities with the US government, think-tank policymakers, and media opinion-makers. Focal areas of activity have been human rights, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and cultural diplomacy and religious dialogue.

### **C. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Record within the Conflicts**

#### **1. Palestine Liberation Organization and Jordan Conflict**

The first internal conflict that the OIC encountered was the conflict between PLO and Jordan in 1970. PLO was not a regular member of the OIC at that time, but was a developing constrain against the Israeli occupation of Palestine

speaking to a critical fragment of the Palestinian population. Jordan, having accommodated a large number of Palestinian refugees, claimed to be the genuine political agent of the Palestinian people. While Jordan was more pragmatic in dealing with Israel, the PLO at that time had a progressive approach to go up against Israel. This difference in approach brought the two parties into a direct armed confrontation in 1970. An understanding of the struggle requests a few references to recent history of the area.

However, most Palestinians sought refuge in Jordan particularly after the 1967 war. Palestinian refugees wanted to precede their battle against the Israeli occupation of their land, and endeavors were made to use Jordan as their base to attack Israeli targets. On its part, Jordan was not willing to let Palestinians use its land. By then the Palestinians had formed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to streamline their battle against Israeli occupation. This brought PLO and Jordan into coordinate confrontation. In 1970, an armed conflict occurred between the two groups. The Jordanian army crushed the PLO in Jordan.

After the outcome of the conflict was decided in the battlefield, two members of OIC Egypt and Saudi Arabia played a critical part in patching up the contrasts between the two sides. The PLO was expelled from Jordan but agreements were made in Cairo and Amman according to which both parties were given indicated parts in Palestinian politics. The PLO continuously got international recognition as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. In a resolution, the OIC expressed its appreciation or the endeavors of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in looking for to accommodate two of its members.

According to the OIC determination it is obvious that Egypt and Saudi Arabia utilized their great workplaces to accommodate between the two conflicting parties. The individual role of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and President Abdul Nasir of Egypt definitely played the most significant role in the negotiation. Both leaders were genuinely concerned about the Palestinian problem and clashing parties were

persuaded approximately their earnestness. As a result, the struggle was resolved to the fulfillment of both parties.

## 2. The Moro National Liberation Front and Government of Philippines Conflict

Insurrection in the Mindanao region began when the Philippines gained independence in 1964, with the country's Muslim community in the south meanwhile calling for self-determination. In 1970, the conflict became violent, with Nur Misuari, the leader of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), leading the charge against the Government of the Philippines (GOP) (Wilson, 2009).

OIC intervention in this conflict began in 1972 with its first fact-finding mission to the Southern Philippines. The OIC later used this mission's report, in 1974, to issue an appeal calling on the GOP and MNLF to engage in negotiations toward a peaceful solution to the crisis while preserving the sovereignty of the Philippines and its territorial integrity (Ihsanoglu, 2010)

The OIC's insistence on treating the conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity of the Philippines helped determine the type of approach – peace negotiations – that would be used to settle the conflict. One major reason Mindanao was prevented from seceding was the pressure that the OIC applied on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) – rival to the MNLF and advocates of secession. The OIC insisted that addressing the cause of the Muslims in the southern region could only be achieved through a negotiated settlement with the Government of Philippines. Furthermore, the OIC refused to recognize the MILF as the sole representative of Muslims in the Philippines in the 2003 OIC summit meeting in Malaysia, thereby weakening the party and its call for secession (Buendia, 2004).

Through its intensive mediation efforts, the OIC was able to bring the GOP and MNLF to a peace agreement in 1996 that emphasized the general framework for peace in the

south and appointed Nur Misuari as Governor of the autonomous southern region. However, Parliament failed to ratify the agreement, leading to a new wave of fighting that ended with the arrest of Misuari for raising arms against the state (Ihsanoglu, 2010).

Furthermore, the GOP reacted favorably to the OIC's appeal and moved Misuari from prison to a hospital and later to a more comfortable detention house (Ihsanoglu 2010). To achieve tangible outcomes, OIC mediation extended its scope, speaking directly to multiple stakeholders; its 2006 fact-finding mission met with Parliament and a variety of civil society organizations. Furthermore, the mission visited Sulu Islan –where fighting was still taking place –and negotiated directly with the parties to reach a ceasefire.

OIC mediation in the Philippines showed a high level of persistence and long-term engagement with the conflict and its parties. Recently, the OIC re-engaged with the parties to explore the chances of implementing the 1996 peace agreement, identify obstacles facing its execution, and provide recommendations on how to overcome them. To do so, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), in coordination with the OIC, donated \$16 million to the MNLF for poverty alleviation and reconstruction of infrastructure in the Southern Mindanao region. Furthermore, five joint working groups were established –sharia and the judiciary, the political system and representation, education, natural resources, and issues of economic development–to oversee implementation of the 1996 final peace agreement in their respective assigned topics and provide recommendations to move the implementation of the peace agreement forward (Al-Saadi, 2007)

While the OIC was able to broker a peace agreement between the MNLF and the GOP, it is obvious that implementation, as in most peace agreements, remains a challenge for the OIC, particularly as it lacks a mechanism to enforce the agreement. Demonstrating long-term commitment to finding a just solution for the conflict is not, in itself, sufficient to ensure long-term peace. The OIC therefore needs to be more innovative in paving the road for successful

implementation of the 1996 peace agreement or for the creation of a new agreement. Finally, it is unclear how sustainable the impact of OIC mediation has on the parties themselves. This has been demonstrated by the arrest of Misuari in November 2001, after which the MNLF resumed violence and significantly undermined the viability of the 1996 agreement.

### 3. Bangladesh – Pakistan Conflict

The next challenge that the OIC encountered was the conflict between Bangladesh and Pakistan. The conflict between the two countries originated when both entities constituted one independent nation state from 1947 to 1971. Muslims from the extreme western and extreme eastern parts of India jointly fought against the British colonial administration and Indian nationalism. However, after independence military and bureaucratic elite, who came mainly from Western Pakistan, gained control over Pakistani politics, and deprived the common people of their legitimate rights.

Freedom loving East Pakistanis were the first to rise against the military bureaucratic Oligarchy of Pakistan. As early as 1948, it was reported in the *Constituent Assembly Debates* that "A feeling is growing among the Eastern Pakistanis that the Eastern Pakistan is being neglected and treated merely as a 'colony' of Western Pakistan. (Sayeed, 1967)"

Soon, East Pakistani representatives in the Constituent Assembly identified two issues of disagreement with West Pakistani representatives. East Pakistanis felt that, by declaring Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan, the importance of their language (Bengali) was being undermined. Some also believed that attempts were being made to transform the numerical majority of the Bengalis in Pakistan to a minority status.

The claim for Urdu being the only national language was supported by the fact that Urdu was the only language that

was generally understood in all regions, while it was not the language of any particular region of Pakistan. On the other hand, the argument for Bengali was that Bengali was the language of the majority of the population of Pakistan and in many respects was a more developed language than Urdu. Therefore, many Bengalis expected their language to be at least one of the official languages of Pakistan.

This eventually led to a civil war in 1971. During the civil war, the OIC Secretary General, Tengku Abdul Rahman, former Prime Minister of Malaysia, visited both parts of Pakistan in an effort to find a political solution to the conflict. The Secretary General was accompanied by representatives from Kuwait and Iran. When the

OIC delegation attempted to visit India, where most of the leaders of de facto Bangladesh had taken political refuge; the Indian authorities prevented them from entering the country on the ground that the OIC had earlier expelled the Indian representative from its First Islamic Conference in 1969 (Pakistan Horizon, 1969). As a result, the mission failed.

The OIC renewed its effort to mediate, now between two independent Muslim nations, after Bangladesh became officially an independent country at the end of 1971 following the military defeat of Pakistani armed forces in the Eastern wing of Pakistan. The general approach of the OIC clearly indicated its commitment to democratic values. In a resolution, the OIC decided to entrust:

*“The Secretary General with the duty of contacting Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, in Islamabad, and Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, in Dacca, in order to arrange for a meeting between them and a delegation of six members, of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers consisting of Algeria, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia ...to bring about agreement, conciliation and brotherhood between the two elected leaders in an atmosphere of Islamic brotherhood, freedom and dignity, as well as to study ways and means of assisting both leaders to solve the problems – OIC Resolution”*



The Secretary General attempted to arrange a meeting between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi leaders in Makkah during the annual pilgrimage. But the Bangladeshi leader declined to sit with his Pakistani counterpart until the latter officially recognized Bangladesh as an independent country.<sup>6</sup> The Pakistani leader, on the other hand, was under tremendous public pressure opposing the idea of recognition. He, however, took the advantage of calling for an OIC summit conference to discuss the results of the 1973 war between Israel and a number of Arab countries.

The Second Islamic Summit Conference was called in Lahore in February 1974, and in the process the Pakistani leader recognized Bangladesh as an independent nation and invited its leader to the conference. Bangladesh responded positively, and since then both Bangladesh and Pakistan are active participants in OIC activities. However, the OIC has not been effective in resolving other crises and conflicts among its member states. The OIC did not seek to intervene in any other conflicts among its members in the 1970s. It never attempted to mediate the disputes between Egypt and Libya, or those between Libya and Sudan.

It did not attempt to intervene on the questions of Western Sahara or Kurdistan. Most of these issues involved two or more members of the OIC. On the contrary, on many occasions the OIC itself became victim of disputes among its member states. At its Eighth Conference of Foreign Ministers (1977), held in Tripoli, Libya, for example, three members - Egypt, Iran, and the Sudan - did not participate on the ground that they did not have diplomatic relations with the host country.