



WFD STATEMENT

WFD calls for the unification process of Sign Languages in the Arab region to cease immediately

Date of issue: June 25, 2009

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is concerned about steps being taken to unify Sign Languages in the Arab region. There are 22 countries and many more indigenous sign languages in the region.

WFD would like to state that such a step is a violation of the linguistic human rights of Deaf people in the region and an unwanted interference with linguistic diversity. Language planning decisions regarding Sign Languages should always remain with the linguistic community, in this case Deaf people, in a similar way as non-native speakers of Arabic language should not interfere with the planning or development of Arabic. Sign Language planning activities should therefore under all circumstances be contrived and realized in cooperation with National Associations of the Deaf.

According to WFD Statement on the Unification of Sign Languages: WFD Board wants to state firmly that any forcible purification or unification of Sign Languages, conducted by governments, professionals working with Deaf people, and organizations for or of the Deaf, is a violation of the UN and UNESCO treaties, declarations and other policies, including the recent UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Deaf people in every country have the sole right to make changes, if necessary, in their own local, provincial and national Sign Languages in response to cultural changes. The control of the development of any Sign Language must be left to any social group where the particular Sign Language is used.

Every sign language in the world, like any spoken language has its own heritage, history, culture and traditions and such a process of forcible purification or unification would be to disregard all of these aspects of a Deaf community. This would be a violation of the linguistic human rights and cultural rights of a sign language community.

The WFD calls for the unification project to cease. In its place, WFD suggests a greater consultation with Deaf people in the region, and strongly recommends cooperation with WFD Ordinary Members. WFD encourages all parties to achieve mutual understanding for better recognition of national sign languages in the Arab region.

For the WFD Statement on the Unification of Sign Languages please click this link:
http://www.wfdeaf.org/pdf/policy_statement_signlanguages.pdf.

WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF (WFD)

WFD is an international, non-governmental central organisation of national associations of Deaf people, with a current membership in 130 countries.

Email: info@wfdeaf.org, Web site: www.wfdeaf.org