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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Plight Of The Baloch People In The Islamic Republic Of Iran

The Baloch people, who mainly reside in the Balochistan region of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are a national group with their own unique cultural identity and language. Balochistan is located in the southeast of the Islamic Republic of Iran and borders Pakistan and Afghanistan, which also have significant Baloch populations. The Baloch language, Balochi, is one of the oldest Indo-European languages and has dialects known as Rakhshani and Sarawani.

The Balochs are primarily Sunni Hanafi Muslims, with a small Shia community in Balochistan.

There are no official statistics on the number of Balochs in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Approximately 20-25% of the Baloch population, estimated to be 3.5 million to 4 million people, lives in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The majority of the Baloch population resides in Pakistan, with around 600,000 residing in southern Afghanistan and others scattered in countries such as the Persian Gulf States and Europe. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Balochs are divided into the Makrani and Sarhadi groups, with cities such as Iranshahr, Chabahar, Nikshahr, Sarbaz, and Saravan being part of the Makran region and Zahedan and Khash being part of the Sarhad region.

Balochistan in the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in the country.

Western Balochistan was annexed by the Islamic Republic of Iran after a defeat in 1928 by Reza Shah's army. This marked the beginning of the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty and a centralized state structure based on Persian national features, such as the promotion of the Persian language, race, and Shiite religion. The Pahlavi regime established policies that allowed for discrimination based on ethnic differences, including the forced assimilation of other nationalities into the Persian identity.

When the Shah's government was replaced by a theocratic regime, the emphasis on the Shiite religion as the state identity only increased, and the Baloch were seen as outside the revolution and alien to its cause. Most of the Baloch people are Sunni Muslims and had already distrusted the new regime due to their emphasis on the Shiite religion. The unequal economic treatment of the Baloch people by the regime only added to the distrust between the Baloch people and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which believes in a single ideal religion, has taken a totalitarian approach toward its citizens, leading to severe tactics of oppression. This has resulted in the creation of an "us vs. them" mentality, where the Baluch people have endured extreme violations of their human rights. Many Baluch individuals are deprived of proper identification, hindering their access to formal education, healthcare, and other crucial social services. This is a tactic used to manipulate the population.

Many innocent Baluch detainees are thrown into jails, where they are barbarically tortured and executed without at least a fair trial. Mass Revenge Killings of innocent prisoners are another tactic used.

Balochistan has been denied any form of the infrastructure of the economy, health, education, and culture as a tactic to oppress and control this region. Even though Balochistan is situated in one of the most land minerals and marine resources-rich areas, it is the poorest in the region. There are areas where children are dying of malnourishment and disease due to not even having access to essential means like clean water.

Even though Balochistan only contributed to about 5% of the population of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a recent report by the UN reveals that it accounts for about 30% of the executions which take place in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This form of cruel attack on the Baluch is only one of many terrorizing tactics and oppressive means of silencing these people.

At the beginning of the movement of "Woman, Life, Freedom", on the famous Zahedan Black Friday Baluch demonstration, the IRGC used military-style attacks massacring over

129 people (1) in a short period of time. These people were simply demonstrating and asking for their basic Human Rights. It is reported that since the movement, over 100 people have been executed, over 201 officially announced injured, and about 304 young men and women detained while four of them were sentenced to execution and many waiting for similar revolutionary court orders. These numbers are not accurate and presumed much more in reality, as many do not have official identification or have been reported missing, and no news has reached families. Many of the injured have kept quiet in order to avoid being identified by the authorities and facing imminent death. It is forbidden to join the weekly Friday demonstrations, which have become the weekly ritual for people across Balochistan in particular Zahedan and Khash by putting checkpoints at roads entering and exiting these two cities. What they demand is basic Human Rights, but face death in doing so. The IRGC does not care who they hit. Their mission is maximum damage and to terrorize the people from continuing with their uprising.

Since the movement, over 20 Baluch children and women have been murdered by the terrorist acts of the IRGC forces. H. N., a 7 years old girl died of gas inhalation which just innocently happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and a 5-year-old girl M. N. shot dead when going to school.

Two brothers A. and M. R. aged only 15 and 16 years old are imprisoned illegally, for a crime that they did not commit. They do not have access to appropriate legal advice or representation. They have now been kept in Zahedan Prison for over 3 months.

Some unofficial sources claim many women have been injured and have life-threatening medical conditions, but are too afraid to seek medical care or to even claim that they have been disabled, as they can be identified by the authorities and taken to prison or even murdered. Wounded civilians were then denied medical care and are currently dying due to a lack of access to medical care. If a doctor is found helping anyone suspected to be part of the demonstrations, they face jail and execution too.

We call on the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council:

- Urge the Iranian authorities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- Investigate allegations of human rights violations against the Baloch people, including arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment in detention, extrajudicial killings and political repression.
- Call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and the cancellation of execution sentences.

Baluchistan Human Rights Group, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

(1) Iran Human Rights Society, “Names and details of 632 martyrs for freedom in Iran’s nationwide protests being completed”, 5 February 2023