



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 4

**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

**Written statement\* submitted by Association pour la défense  
des droits de l'homme et des revendications  
démocratiques/culturelles du peuple Azerbaidjanais-Iran -  
« ARC », 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.

[30 May 2023]

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



## **The Role of Azerbaijani Victims in Recent Protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This Statement is submitted by Association pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des revendications démocratiques/culturelles du peuple Azerbaïdjanais-Iran - « ARC » with respect to the deteriorating human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially with respect to women and children. It reflects the arbitrary acts of paramilitary and security operatives of the Iranian authorities in Azerbaijani provinces in the Islamic Republic of Iran and identifies the impacts and the mindset of the Iranian authorities in hiding the Azerbaijani dimension.

The commendable initiative of the independent international Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) by the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) is focussed on recent protests from September 2022 until early 2023 but the procedure in the Iranian kangaroo courts is still ongoing. Both women and children are vulnerable in the Islamic Republic of Iran but the vulnerable groups also include the youth, the poor, and minority nations in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The protests pooled together all these vulnerable groups and hopefully the FFM will put together the full by considering the circumstances surrounding the alleged violations, and be engaged with all relevant stakeholders, including the activists inside and outside the Islamic Republic of Iran who have been threatened by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### **Impacts of Arbitrary Acts of the Iranian Authorities in Azerbaijani Provinces**

Although protests were country-wide, the Baluchis, Azerbaijanis, Arabs, Kurds, Lurs, Qashqays, Turkmens and other nations displayed their own trend, traits and red lines. Below are salient features displayed by the Azerbaijani protests. As soon as protests broke out in Karaj, the Iranian repressive machinery was out in action in Azerbaijani provinces, as summarised below:

- The authorities enforced an undeclared curfew throughout Azerbaijani cities (Tabriz, Urmia, Ardabil and Zanjan) at night times after Karaj protests; and governed by fear using special forces, paramilitary units and plainclothes agents.
- Protest breakouts were made nearly impossible in Azerbaijani cities but security agents rounded up 1700 individuals in the early days from their houses in Tabriz alone.
- Our reported ballpark figures indicated some 3000 Azerbaijani individuals were rounded up at initial dates.
- We have compiled 761 names by early May 2023, of whom we note the following:
  - As many as 45 individuals have suffered nearly a total of 114 years of imprisonment sentences.
  - Some 16 individuals have been identified to be at risk of capital punishment.
  - At least, 40 Azerbaijani individuals have suffered extrajudicial deaths;
  - Some 7 Azerbaijani lawyers have been prosecuted.
  - Those maimed by direct bullet hits avoided hospitals treatment for the fear of being arrested in hospitals; no specific information, other than anecdotal individual cases.
  - We were not at liberty to disclose the individuals who suffered indecent acts and rapes.
  - Sentences also include a significant number of these individuals with heinous acts of flagging, being banned from travelling to foreign countries, and banishment to far-flung parts of the country outside Azerbaijani provinces normally with harsh climatic conditions.

- Some are being banned from their normal practices or their university courses or publishing on social media.
- The authorities falsify carefully records on detainees and extrajudicial deaths.
- The victim families are forced to issue false statements; the bodies of murdered individuals are only returned to their families by paying ransom to the authorities or complying with the Iranian authorities by denying the role of the Iranian authorities in the murder of their loved ones.

There are many cynical acts by the Iranian authorities in Azerbaijani provinces but their use of the prisoners' dilemma is the most dreadful one with the intention of inflicting fear, suspicion and distrust among Azerbaijani activists. They also make deals with less informed activists to be set free, should they give written undertaking for not becoming an activist or a protester in the future. In this way, the authorities make a mockery of the Universal Human Rights Declaration by infringing on the most basic human rights of Azerbaijanis.

At the tail-end of the protests, we started to witness a new phenomenon: poisoning female students at their schools to deter them from education, as a measure of preserving hijab and pressing their ideological dogma that the place of women is their home, not schools or offices. The first act of poisoning took place in Qom on 30 November 2022 and by early March 2023, it was widespread to the extent that the Ministry of Health stated that 13,000 students were treated by then. The Iranian authorities put restrictions on the news but social media acted as the remaining source of information. Such exposures in Azerbaijani provinces have been reported widely in social media and include the cities and towns, e.g., Ardabil, Zanjan, Maragha, Urmia, Khoy, Ushnov and Tabriz. It is important to note that the Iranian authorities have not denied it but they accuse others of inflicting the acts. This accusation is absurd, the Iranian authorities have done nothing effective to find the culprits.

### **Characteristics of Azerbaijani Protests and Mindset of the Iranian Authorities in Azerbaijani Provinces**

The typical response of the Iranian authorities to any protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran is that as soon as some protests happen in the Islamic Republic of Iran, they immediately dispatch their special units to Azerbaijani provinces. In this case, the strength of the countrywide protests was clear immediately when they broke out in Karaj in September 2022 and seemed to be of a revolutionary proportion. The Iranian authorities immediately dispatched their forces to Tabriz, Urmia, Zanjan and Ardabil.

Minority nations displayed their character in the recent protests, so that some resorted to armed struggle, but Azerbaijanis were minded by pressing their brand: the struggle without losing life. Their protests reaffirmed that they were founded on the human rights of the individuals, and the national rights of the nation of Azerbaijan in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian authorities enforced an undeclared curfew throughout Azerbaijani cities and towns, particularly at night times creating an atmosphere of fear. The Azerbaijani cities were militarized from the very early stages in mid-September 2022 by the presence of special forces, paramilitary units and plainclothes agents hovering over the city centres. These forces rounded up cultural and environmental activists.

Plainclothes security agents were seen setting fire to buildings in central quarters of Azerbaijani towns to prepare the ground for arresting activists and protesters and accusing them of these arson attacks. The Iranian authorities also resorted to extrajudicial killings and rounding up individuals and Azerbaijani activists and put every effort to falsify the records on detainees and extrajudicial deaths. As mentioned above, the Iranian authorities pressurised the families for false confessions and put the condition of obtaining the body of the murdered victims when the family members were obliged. This cynical practice has been going on for a long time and is not a new invention but this time implemented with a higher vigour.

Iranian authorities were swift to cut the internet and prosecute social media activists. The acts of arrests in the streets were normally brutal and associated with violence to inflict fear and wreaked havoc by shooting at the vulnerable and civilians. The arrest of the Azerbaijani activists normally took place in their houses, where the searches were associated with wrecking the house, beating up and intimidating family members, particularly the children and the elder, and confiscating personal items. These raids were normally without any court order and the entries to the houses were forced entries through the walls and rarely by the doors, to maximise the fear. The arrested individuals were not normally given the right of access to any lawyer, let alone the lawyer of their choice.

The victims of direct shootings normally avoided hospitals, as security agents trapped them there and arrested them. When detainees were released in Azerbaijani provinces, almost all of them were done so on bail and this means that this reveals the normal practice of gagging the activists with specially crafted sentences.

There were horrendous details coming from females arrested in schools, who were taken to remote places and subjected to indecent acts and gang rapes, and some were killed in this way. A great deal of the families of such victims remained silent to protect family honour or feared the reprisal by security agents.

### **Concluding Remarks**

We wish to draw your attention to the followings:

1. The disinformation and misinformation machinery in the Islamic Republic of Iran against the nation of Azerbaijan in the Islamic Republic of Iran operates in every conceivable way.
2. Iranian authorities particularly targeted human rights defenders of Azerbaijanis and aim to silence them by the prisoner's dilemma or by directly threatening activists inside or outside the Islamic Republic of Iran.
3. We can arrange meetings between the FFM members and some of the Azerbaijani victims of recent protests.

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