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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

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

[1 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Civil Society Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Non-governmental organizations are key components of social capital all around the world that are actually the voice of whoever suffers from injustices and disparities. In the lack of adequate support from authorities, these organizations even take actions in areas for which the governmental authorities are responsible.

However, in some countries, these organizations are under pressure of political power structures and are being marginalized in several aspects. Although these humanitarian organizations have never expected to be rewarded they could never stand being labeled and treated as national threats. The social milieu resulting from these kinds of unwise actions makes it difficult to extend the culture of altruism among different groups of societies through responsible participation within NGOs and CSOs.

Independent civil society and non-governmental organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including IAPSRs are experiencing the same situation nowadays. Members of IAPSRs are present in the most deprived areas of the country and also keep advocating and monitoring to relieve the heavy burden of educational exclusion and the feeling of being forgotten, to be the reflection of children's and women's voices, to guide them to a brighter future and help them live more decently.

In the absence of principled mechanisms and comprehensive scientific actions by governments, the social-environmental crises are weakening human capital progressively. In this situation, civil and non-governmental organizations are a glimpse of hope for condition changing by increasing public awareness and partnership, at least in the long-term. Therefore, in today's society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, threatening these volunteer organizations is irrational and absurd action which is a truth that necessitates warning about its catastrophic repercussions.

The current situation indicates that despite all-volunteer and selfless efforts, these civil societies and non-governmental organizations have to get used to these destructive behaviors and manners and expect that their peace-based activism in the scope of law from now on could be labeled as national security accusations. This will bring about a fearsome situation in which members of society opt for being silent and indifferent about the abuse of children, severe hunger, the addiction of infants and kids, and all other social challenges which spoil justice and humanity goals.

Although the pessimism of some groups about the independent social activities and movements has straitened social activism in the Islamic Republic of Iran from a long time ago, a close view on the current actions taken against independent NGOs and their volunteer members resembles strong intentions to disable or shut down these independent organizations.

Considering all the functional drawbacks that exist among internal mechanisms for addressing social challenges, it is obvious that the elimination of these non-governmental organizations would aggravate social dilemmas such as poverty, addiction, and violence. Unfortunately, this would threaten the lives of the most vulnerable groups and the whole Iranian community in the present and future time.

Since 25 years ago, IAPSRs has always tried to handle its monitoring role in a completely honest way and has always been ready to clear up misunderstandings transparently.

In July 2020, these oppressions resulted in the prisoning of the founder and two members of IAPSRs and led to the detention of its director, who was being accused and defamed in several ways without any evidence, which was an apparent contradiction with national law and constitution.

In March 2021, a few months after these members were released on bail, IAPSRs was sentenced to dissolution in the preliminary hearing brought before the court against this organization due to a complaint filed by the Ministry of Interior Affairs. IAPSRs appealed against this judgment; however, at the same time, it legally continued all its activities and projects in deprived areas of the country while struggling with the mentioned complicated situation.

Still, thousands of members of IAPSRs, dedicating several hours each week to educate and support the children of families prone to life-threatening dangers resulting from poverty and drug addiction. It is worth mentioning that the entrepreneurship and empowerment centers of IAPSRs are still open. These centers are the only hope source for females heading their families by affording their kids' housing, education, and nourishment expenses.

Also, right now, a variety of classes in physical education, music, theatre, painting, and photography are still in progress which helps children manage their emotions such as anger and helps them experience calmness in this world.

Despite all difficulties, the activities in education-entrepreneurial centers of IAPSRs continue since the members of this CSO/NGO feel responsible for the lives of their kinds as before.

We hope one day, the light of wisdom will diminish the shadow of ignorance so that the independent civil partnerships would not be treated as a danger but be considered an opportunity to relieve the societies from the filthy chains of corruption, discrimination, and disparity.
