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**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

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.

[12 May 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.



Discrimination against the Kurds in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Kurds are an indigenous and ancient people who have remained in their lands for over 10,000 years. The territory of the Kurds has been divided during several historical periods between a few countries which are now neighbors and have common borders. The majority of the Kurdish population lives in the following countries: Turkey, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Armenia. Due to policies of discrimination and assimilation, there are no official statistics on the number of Kurds.

Kurdish population in the Islamic Republic of Iran

- The Kurdish population in the Islamic Republic of Iran is estimated at more than 14 million, equivalent to 17% of the country's total population. They live in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah (in Kurdish ; Kermanshan), Ilam, Lorestan and Hamadan.

Some of them, who have already been displaced, also live in the north and northeast of Khorasan province. A number have settled in some northern and southern provinces and Tehran.

Economy Situation

- The Kurds in the Islamic Republic of Iran have long been victims of discrimination. Their social, political, and cultural rights have been violated and their regions remained to wretched and painful deprivation. Kurdish regions have been economically neglected resulting in entrenched poverty. Forced evictions and the destruction of homes have left Kurds with limited access to adequate housing.
- The Kurdish regions are the poorest regions compared to the rest of the country. The unemployment rate is too high. Medium and strategic industrial projects in these areas are restricted or prohibited.
- The region's underground resources, such as oil, gold and other resources, are widely extracted. But the income generated by resource extraction is not spent on the development and job creation in the region.
- Residents of border areas resort to illegal transport of goods across the border for their livelihood and subsistence. This illegal profession in Kurdish language is called 'Kolbery'. This puts Colbert's life in danger of dying.
- Under the pretext of the existence of the Kurdish Peshmergas (Kurdish Defense Forces), the forests of the Kurdish areas are set on fire. Volunteers and environmental activists who intend to put out the fire are arrested and imprisoned.
- Water sources are being destroyed and regions' water is flowing to the central regions of the Islamic Republic of Iran through underground tunnels. This has led to the drying up of several rivers and the degradation of the ecology of the region.

Education Situation

- The lack of educational infrastructure and schools in the Kurdish areas prevent children from continuing their education. In some areas, students have to travel a long way to school.
- Children who can study or continue their studies cannot study in their mother tongue. This reduces the desire to study and the percentage of academic success of students.
- The Iranian Constitution stipulates that the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and media, as well as for the teaching of regional and tribal literature in schools, is permitted alongside the Persian language (art. 15). However, no practical

measurements have been introduced in the Iranian education system to facilitate teaching in minority languages or to teach these languages as a second language.

Cultural Situation

- Kurdish parents do not have the right to choose Kurdish names for their children and the use of several names is strictly prohibited. Each registry office has a list of authorized names; a birth certificate is issued only if the family agrees to use an authorized name.
- The practice of ethnic and Kurdish national celebrations and feasts is very limited and many special ceremonies, including weddings, are only possible under strict conditions.

Religion Situation

- Most of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims, although a minority are Shiites. Some are Ahl-e Haq (Yarsani), Baha'is, Zoroastrians, and followers of the Qaderi and Naqshbandi schools of Sufism.
- Iranian Kurds face discrimination because of their religion, although the Sunni Islam is a recognized Islamic approach and has formal legal status in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The official religion of the Islamic Republic of Iran is Shia Islam, which is clearly favored by the state. Iranian law does not recognize Yarsanism and their rituals are prohibited. The Ahl-e Haq (Yarsani) religious minority group lives predominately in Kermanshah and in or around major cities. They are also prohibited from discussing their faith publicly on the media.

Political Situation

- Kurdish political parties are banned in the country and most of them are based in Iraqi Kurdistan. Their members and sympathizers are wanted by the Iranian military intelligence services. If arrested, they will be tortured, ill-treated, imprisoned or executed.
- Kurdish human rights defenders, socio-cultural activists, environmental activists, community activists and journalists risk arbitrary arrest and prosecution. Some have been imprisoned because of expression of their opinion publicly. Others face torture, unfair trials in revolutionary courts and the death penalty.

Unlawful killings by security forces

- In 2021, at least 215 Colbars were killed and injured by direct and indiscriminate fire from Iranian security forces.
- In the same year, more than 11 Kurdish prisoners in Iranian prisons lost their lives under torture.
- The number of executions in the Islamic Republic of Iran is still high and the Kurds still constitute the largest number of victims.
- Haidar Ghorbani, a Kurdish political prisoner whose lawyer did not yet have sufficient proof of his guilty, was executed in Sanandaj prison on 19/12/2021, and even neither his lawyer nor his family was informed.

Arbitrary arrests

Forced arrests and unfair sentences against Kurdish activists are still continuing. In July 2021, a court sentenced Kurdish civil rights activist Zahra Mohammadi, 29 years old, to 10 years

in prison for undermining national security. Mohammadi was the director of the Nojin Cultural Association, an organization of volunteers who teaches Kurdish language and literature. She was initially charged with links to two-armed opposition groups, but the charges were dropped. Ms. Mohammadi's 10-year prison sentence was reduced to 5 years by the Iranian Court of Appeal. According to Ms. Mohammadi and her lawyer, her only crime is establishing an organization and teaching the Kurdish language.

On the evening of February 15, a large number of plainclothes agents of the Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Vezarat-e Ettela'at) raided the residence of a Kurdish citizen named Mr. Kiomars Latifi and arrested him in a violent manner.

According to family and witnesses, the victim was beaten, mentally and physically abused by officers, and taken to an unknown location.

Mr. Latifi had been held in unknown locations for several months. But he was recently transferred to Sanandaj Central Prison. The reasons for his arrest are still unknown, and Iranian judicial officials have remained silent. Mr. Latifi is also a member of the Mawlawi Kurd Cultural Organization and a volunteer Kurdish language teacher. Given his past arrests, he may have been arrested for his cultural and educational activities.

Recommendations

Since the Iranian government has endorsed or signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Minorities, Religions and Languages, and several other international declarations and conventions relating to the rights of minorities, it is necessary to implement these recommendations:

- The Islamic Republic of Iran should fully implement the Declaration of the Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities.
- The Islamic Republic of Iran should respect the provisions of international humanitarian law and exercise maximum restraint in the use of force.
- They should design and put in place normative frameworks that recognize, support, and promote minority languages.
- They should strengthen the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, which addresses the fight against intolerance, negative stereotypes, stigma, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against certain people because of their religion or belief.

Alliance for Minority Rights - Association Projet Démocratique du Kurdistan iranien, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

Thus article 15 stipulates that: "Persian is the official and common language and script of the Iranian people. Documents, correspondence, official texts and textbooks must all be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and ethnic languages in the press, the mass media, and the teaching of their literature in schools, alongside the Persian language, is freely permitted".