**Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association**

**Written submission**

**Effective participation, consultation and consent of indigenous women and girls in political and public life**

**Day general discussion on "the rights of indigenous women and girls"-**

**June 24, 2021**

**S****ubmitted to:** The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

**Submitted by:** Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (which has a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council).

There are an estimated 476 million indigenous peoples in the world, living across 90 countries. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world’s estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures. It is estimated that approximately 50 per cent of the total Indigenous population, 238 million people, are women.[[1]](#footnote-1) Although the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the relevant international treaties guarantee these women full protection, they are exposed to a wide range of systematic violations, topped by violence in all its forms and discrimination based on identity. Moreover, indigenous women and girls are subjected to racial discrimination as members of indigenous communities. All such practices make them more vulnerable to other human rights violations that are integral to the intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality to which they are exposed.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Other patterns of abuse suffered by Indigenous women include marginalization and exclusion from political representation and participation in public affairs both by federal government, and the governments of self-governing territories.

In contrast to women who face a male-dominated patriarchal political system, the indigenous peoples find themselves face-to-face with a mono-ethnic political system that excludes diversity of identity. Both systems – the patriarchal and the mono-ethnic – work to undermine the civil and political rights of Indigenous women.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Believing in the gravity of the issue under consideration by the CEDAW Committee, **Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights** presents this written intervention, hoping that the facts contained in the report would inspire and inform the committee’s upcoming recommendations. Maat recognizes that the right of women in indigenous communities is closely linked to their right to self-determination enshrined in the UNDRIP, among other rights stipulated in the CEDAW; however, in reality, indigenous women have always been marginalized and excluded from all kinds of effective participation, especially in the countries of the Middle East. Indigenous women have also been denied the right to participate in decision-making processes, both at the national level and in self-governing territories, only few have been given this right. In certain countries, women do not participate at all in the political process or the public affairs of the state.

Maat believes that marginalization, exclusion, inequality and discrimination, including racial discrimination against indigenous women, are an inevitable result of their lack of political representation and their confinement in the traditional and stereotypical roles imposed on them by societies and governments. In Ethiopia, for example, despite the decisions issued in favor of women’s empowerment, as Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has appointed women to half of his government's ministerial posts, including the job of defence minister, she was soon dismissed.[[4]](#footnote-4) Despite all these resolutions that are to include all women regardless of their nationality, race and ethnicity, Indigenous women in five major nationalities in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region; namely (Alberta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao And Kumo), are not represented in the Ethiopian government despite the unprecedented rise in ministerial portfolios reserved for women, as already mentioned. The Ethiopian government replaced these women with women from the Amhara and other nationalities allied with the ruling Prosperity Party (PP). Government representation of indigenous women in Ethiopia is not the only problem; the percentage of women representation in Benishangul-Gumuz Region of the aforementioned nationalities in the executive institutions, the diplomatic corps, and the judiciary is almost non-existent.[[5]](#footnote-5) Also, 212 out of the 547 parliamentary seats in Ethiopia are dominated by women, that is 39% of women are represented in the Ethiopian parliament. However, no single woman among them belongs to the indigenous population of the Benishangul-Gumuz Region that has always been marginalized by the federal government, which is inconsistent with the UNDRIP and the relevant international treaties.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Ethiopia is not a unique case of the poor political representation of indigenous women. In Turkey, Kurdish women suffer from the disproportionate impact of discrimination against them in holding public office. Kurds constitute 20% of the total population in Turkey, more than half of them are women. In Turkey, Kurdish women are not represented in the government, and women, in general, are not represented at the government level except in one ministerial portfolio belongs to the Family and Social Services Minister, Derya Yanık, who was appointed in April 2021.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Turkish government does not disclose the percentage of Kurdish women’s representation in public jobs, in the workforce, and in executive institutions. However, it was reported that the percentage is very insignificant, barely exceeding 1% in Turkish government institutions, and almost non-existent in the diplomatic corps and judicial bodies. By the same token, non-Kurdish women in Turkey do not occupy the position of governor of the provinces except in two municipalities out of 81 municipalities. As for administrative jobs in the municipalities, women make up only 1.3%, which prove the weak representation of women, in general, and Kurdish women, in particular, in Turkey, whether in the local administration structures in municipalities or at the executive level in government institutions.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Kurdish women in the Turkish parliament were threatened that their immunity will be lifted before it was already revoked from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) co-chair, Pervin Buldan.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Indigenous women in Iran are not represented in the government, they can’t assume leading executive positions, and are barred from running for president under the Constitution and subsequent local laws. Accordingly, the lack of political representation of indigenous women in Iran, such as Azeri, Baluch and Ahwazi women, comes within the framework of an Iranian policy, which is characterized by discrimination against the regions inhabited by indigenous peoples. Iranian regions with non-Persian ethnic minorities - especially the Ahwaz region - witnessed some protests against racism and insults practiced by the Iranian government towards the Arab minority who were faced to receive education in the Persian language. The Iranian government has also marginalized the Ahwazis through the confiscation of land by force, and the diversion of rivers from the Ahwaz regions to Persian regions, which led to a decrease in the amount of water available to the Ahwazi people, in addition to the discriminatory and racist employment practices that differentiate between Iranian citizens on the basis of sect.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights recommends the following:**

* The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must request, in its recommendations, the states parties to allocate additional quotas for indigenous women to be represented at the political level, and to remove all obstacles barring them from holding leadership positions in the state.
* Establishing a mechanism to monitor the indigenous women political representation and effective participation in public affairs, in line with the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples and in a manner that guarantees these women a broader representation that reduces the gap of discrimination and inequality to which they have been subjected in the past decades.
* The CEDAW should call upon states parties to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to take immediate and effective measures to include indigenous women in decision-making processes.
* The necessity of paying special attention to amending local legislation that prevents indigenous people from assuming leadership positions, because restricting some leadership positions to a particular nationality, sect or political group denies the indigenous people the status of citizenship.
* The need for the committee to attach special importance to collecting, monitoring and analyzing local legislations and laws in countries that prevent indigenous peoples from political representation on an equal basis with other nationalities in the country.

1. Shattering the Glass Ceiling for Indigenous Women, United Nation, Available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3iXnplE> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. أنظر الوثيقة A/HRC/30/41، ص 13، الفقرة 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Political Participation of Indigenous Women in the Ecuadorian Congress: Unfinished Business, page 2, Available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3xyAwhd> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ethiopia's Abiy gives half of ministerial posts to women, BBC News, 16 October2018, Available at the following link: <https://bbc.in/3gzcTzu> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Ethiopia, <https://bit.ly/35vhpJ6> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Women’s Political Participation Africa Barometer 2021 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral, Page 53, Available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/35vdw6P> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. أردوغان يقيل وزيرة التجارة بعد اتهامها بمحاباة زوجها في مناقصة حكومية، العربي الجديد، 21 أبريل 2021، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/35xCiTX> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. الشعب الجمهوري" التركي يكشف عن حصيلة كارثية لوعود حزب أردوغان الانتخابية، أمد للإعلام، 28 يونيو 2020، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3vwh97n> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. تركيا.. الحكومة تطلب رفع الحصانة عن 9 نواب من الحزب الكردي، زمان التركية، 20 فبراير 2021، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3vBFNDw> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. الدستور الإيراني، المادة 115، ص 24، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/2TDxaem> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)