



General Assembly
Human Rights Council
Forum on Minorities Issues
3rd session

Item 7 . Concrete steps to advance and build the capacity of minorities
to participate affectively in economic life

Madame Chair,

The ethnic and religious minorities in Iran constitute the majority of the Iranian population. Articles 15 and 19 of the Iranian Constitution recognize the rights of ethnic minorities to have access to the publications and teaching in the local languages in addition to the national language (Persian).

Iran was one of the countries signatory of the International Pact relating to the Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, in 1975), which declares that "*in these States in which there are ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, the people belonging to these minorities will not be denied in their rights, they can enjoy their own culture, to affirm and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.*" This means that State cannot prevent a minority from using its language; moreover it has the duty to make sure that it can meet in association, publish in its language and practise its religion without discrimination.

But to date, the ethnic and religious minorities are marginalized politically, culturally and economically. Their real participation in the decision-makings and their election in important positions in the government remain at minima, in fact the minorities are prevented from taking part in the political and economic choices of the State.

The Kurdish people in Iran, when having asserted their fundamental socio-cultural rights, always were treated with mistrust and were marginalized. To date, no important project was set up to develop capacities and potentials in the Kurdish area. The economic projects in this area are strictly controlled by the Iranian Government. Some rare projects financed by the Iranian State, in the Kurdish area, have been set up to serve certain particular political goals.

The Government strictly prevented the private sector from developing and investing in the area. The official statistics of the State clearly show inequalities on the level of the allocations of the financial investments and it is noted that the Kurdish area was voluntarily neglected.

To date, there is not any banking structure in the Kurdish area of Iran, or the possibility of supporting investments. Moreover, the arrival of Sipah Pasdaran to the area, as an economic force, this without any real project of investment, has put in difficulty the few remaining chances for the private sector.

The situation of the human rights in Iran, has hardly improved, including for the Kurdish people. Far from the media coverage, the arbitrary arrest, the summary judgements with inappropriate punishments against Kurdish pacifist activists, are a common occurrence.

The Director of the Kurdish Organization of the Human Rights, Mr Mohammad Siddiq Kaboudwand, condemned to 11 years of confinement in spite of his illness, is still in prison. At least 15 Kurdish activists condemned to death, do still risk their lives.

We recommend that the Iranian government:

- releases all the individuals deprived of their freedom, who only have peacefully exerted their right to the freedom of expression and meeting;
- opens investigations transparent and independent into all the cases of complaints of torture and ill treatment inflicted to prisoners and persecutes and judges the persons responsible for these acts;
- respects and applies articles 15 and 19 of the Constitution which recognize the rights of the ethnic minorities to publish articles and books and to teach in the local languages in addition to the national language;
- finally, that it installs the appropriate mechanisms so that the minorities living in Iran can take part in the socio-economic decisions which relate to them directly.

I thank you, Madame Chair.

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