

Intervention by Kosar Alali member of Ahwaz Education and Human Rights Foundation to
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Forum on Minority Issues
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Geneva

Agenda 3: Right to Education

Honourable Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen

This is a brief description of dire living conditions and violence brought upon the Arab Ahwazi women, as multi-layer gender-nationality oppression. These women have been subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, economic and most importantly cultural violence.

In the economically kept backward societies, where the cultural, traditional and religious pressures are immense, women are subjected to severe discrimination and violence. Because violence is systematic, finding solutions require dealing with the fundamental and structural issues.

One can add the destructive effects of eight years of Iran-Iraq war, which achieved nothing but mass displacements, homelessness, poverty and loss of national identity for the Arab-Ahwazi people, particularly women. Official statistics show that the Arab-Ahwazi women usually get cancer at the age of 35, 80% do not pursue higher education and 50% of graduates remain unemployed.

These statistics have been used by the authorities such as Maryam Haydarian, who is the deputy governor of Ahwaz (officially called Khuzestan). Ironically, she is not even familiar with the language, culture, habits, traditions and costumes of the Arab-Ahwazi women.

However the Arab-Ahwazi women have continued to struggle alongside women from other nationalities and have actively participated in realms of politics, economy, education, culture and literature.

Fahimeh Esmaeli is one of these dedicated and educated women who after the execution of her husband, a political and social activist, has been condemned to 15 years of imprisonment.

Another example is Masumeh Kabi, who was put under immense pressures by the authorities to obtain a forced confession from her against her husband.

Sakineh Neisi is another Arab-Ahwazi woman, who under colossal and violent pressures by the security forces had a miscarriage in prison whilst she was three months pregnant.

I recommend the followings for the improvement of the general conditions of the Arab-Ahwazi women:

- 1) Development of the education, particularly teaching Arabic as the first language from elementary schools to the university levels and publications of articles, books and other creations by women.
- 2) Development of the general hygiene, psychological and social conditions and provisions for social security for the Arab-Ahwazi women.

Let us hope for the day when the Arab Ahwazi woman has the same right to education as any other Iranian woman: the right to express her ideas and beliefs and the right to love.

Thank you.