

**Intervention by ...from ... submitted to the 6th Session of the FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES 26-27
November 2013**

Madam Chair, Thank you for the opportunity: I am here to speak about the Ahwazi-Aran ethnic minority in Iran. Ahwazi-Arabs are an ethnic, national, linguistic minority in Iran estimated to be 5-7 million in who live in South-western Iran on the province of Khuzestan or Al-Ahwaz or Arabistan as it called by its native Arab population.

The best practical use and implementation of the declaration would be for the states to first acknowledge the existence and the identity of its minorities and provide credible statistics on their situations.

While the declaration has had some successes in some countries, unfortunately, after 20 years we have not seen any improvements in Iran.

Ahwazi-Arab ethnic minority have continued to be viewed with suspicion and hostility, by Tehran. Ahwazi Arab minority face social and economic discrimination, enduring hardship, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment at higher rates than the national average also a prolonged forced assimilation.

The Islamic Republic has consistently ignored the demands of national groups, to implement Articles 15 and 19 of the 1979 Constitution, which guarantee the use regional languages and equal rights of ethnic groups[1] It does not acknowledge and/or recognize the existence of Ahwazi-Arabs as a people, nationality or a community.

The Islamic Republic has consistently barred or disqualified Ahwazi-Arab minority representatives from participating in local and parliament elections and candidates.

Religiously, Ahwazi-Arabs are Shia, Sunni and Manadei or Salebis.

Madam chair, in recent year and in reaction too these discrimination, there is major movement of conversion from Shia to Sunni among Arabs. This movement is spontaneous. Yet, the Islamic republic launched a campaign of persecution of newly converted Sunnis and labels them as Wahis, Selfis, terrorist and stooges of outside power- Hen there has been dozens of public execution in the past 2 years. Eleven are awaiting execution as their execution has been approved by the Iranian supreme court..

Manadeis, an Aran non-Muslim minority have been persecuted and they have been forced to leave the country.

A positive measure would be to allocate certain job quotas in the areas where minorities live. Arabs are faced with discrimination in the Iranian civil service. Of the top 25 governmental positions, only two or three are Arabs. The 70% of Arab populations of Khuzestan hold less than 5% of the key and important governmental positions. With inadequate political representation, the Ahwazi Arabs are unable to address the injustices faced by their people in the economic, cultural, political and judicial sphere.

Although Khuzestan province produces 90% of Iran's oil resources, its people have been viewed, at best, as an inconvenience, or, at worst, a threat, by the Iranian government. Oil revenues from the province are largely spent elsewhere. The Iranian government has consistently refused to allocate just 1.5% of oil revenues to Khuzestan, as requested by the province's representatives in the Majlis

Despite the province's fertility and potential in agriculture, Ahwazi farmers are suffering from a lack of leading rural poverty.

Despite the clear stipulation by the all articles of the declaration on the protection of minorities, there is strong evidence that the Iranian authorities are orchestrating a policy of land confiscation and forced migration in line with the "ethnic restructuring" program outlined in a top secret letters written by Sayed Mohammad-Ali Abtahi. The other positive measure to protect the rights of minorities would be for the states to report on the state of education in the areas where minorities live:

Most Arab villages have no schools and lack basic services, according to Mr. Million Koy-thari, the former special rapporteur of adequate housing during his visit to Khuzestan in 2005.