**The Response by ArcDH to Questions by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues**

**Introduction**

This is a **response** (the Response) to the Call for Written Submissions to the [**Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues**](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-minority-issues) and aims to inform him towards the preparation of his 2024 report. ArcDH, prepared the Response, is focused on defending the rights (human, environmental and any other rights) of the nation of Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani provinces in Iran.

**Our Understanding of the Response**

The Response to the six questions is structured by highlighting institutional arrangements in Iran, focused on Article 2, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the [**1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities**](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic) towards the 2024 Report by the [**Special Rapporteur on minority issues**](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-minority-issues).

The Response to each question is as follows:

**Response to Question-1**

ArcDH holds that the UN-conferred rights, let alone the interests of more than 30 million nation of Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani provinces, are not, and have not been, taken into account in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such a systemic violation of their rights is facilitated by an organizational arrangement inherited from the notorious SAVAK of the Pahlavi dynasty, which now forms the deep State in Iran infested with racism and tribalistic worship of mythological ancestors. This explains why the Iranian authorities violate Article 15 of their own Constitution giving some meagre recognition for education in non-Persian mother tongues, and most persistently do not ratify it.

The violation of the right to education is a drop in the ocean but the existence of a deep State is not sufficient to understand the mindset of Iranian authorities. For a deeper understanding, it is important to realize that the government in Iran is a network of colluding departments with a highly tribalistic culture. This network is wide and permeates even the so-called civil societies in Iran. Otherwise, any opportunity for any independently-minded individuals or organization is squeezed out. Although Azerbaijani provinces have provincial arrangements, all decisions are made by the central government. To understand the scale of central decision-making in Iran, it suffices to state that even the permission for Azerbaijani-Turkish names of newborn children must be approved in Tehran and it is not rare if the process takes a few years.

Within the above-described organizational arrangement, Azerbaijani individuals have no rights but are at the discretion of the central government and local officials, who are normally politically subservient and trained to be tough and act ruthlessly.

**Response to Question-2**

Political representation in the Iranian Majlis comprises:

* Two factions of candidates that are nominally referred to in various ways (sometimes as radicals and reformers). Both factions are strictly required to be loyal to the supreme leader and only differ from each other by as much as that of Coca-Cola from Pepsi Cola.
* The so-called independent individuals, who strictly comply with the religious and tribalistic nationalist Iranian discourse on all accounts and are most likely supported by the colluding network.
* Beyond these arrangements, there are various organizations to perpetuate the monolithic arrangement of the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the most notorious of which is the *Guardian Council of Iran* with appointed memberships and veto powers on pivotal issues. The Guardian Council of Iran also vets the candidates for the Iranian Majlis and ArcDH can provide details, if necessary, that the Guardian Council is the most explicit to block Azerbaijani candidates to the so-called elected governmental bodies with pro-identity tendencies.
* The nation of Azerbaijan remains unrepresented in the power structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Existing Azerbaijani officials are nominally Azerbaijani by birth but politically subservient and do not protect the rights of Azerbaijanis. In a more direct and simple language, they are useless and how else can one explain that despite a meagre amount of right to education in mother tongues in the Iranian Constitution (Article 15), to date there is no single classroom in all Azerbaijani provinces teaching Azerbaijani Turkish in licensed schools of education.

**Response to Question-3**

The nation of Azerbaijan in Iran has neither any protection by way of any insulation provision nor any representative to speak up for their interests, rights or culture. In stead, the Iranian authorities often trap Azerbaijanis in many different ways, even using elections. For instance, during the 2024 elections to the Iranian Majlis, Iranian authorities took a few intriguing steps towards seeding racial tension against Azerbaijanis in one of the Azerbaijani provinces.

**Response to Question-4**

The response to this question is a matter of narratives and whose side one is. There are two narratives, as described by a critiquing human rights organization. Naturally, Iranian authorities will try to use sweet words to hide their shortfall.

Iran is a multicultural multinational country but the discourse of the Iranian authorities on ethnicity is to claim that everyone is Iranian and therefore there is no racism or discrimination in Iran. No single one has been prosecuted in Iran for racism, whereas the country is infested with systemic racism. What matters is serious damage has been inflicted on the psychology of the nation of Azerbaijan in Iran by transforming the slow death inflicted by the Pahlavi dynasty into an accelerated death process under the auspices of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Aspects of impacts include:

* The Azerbaijani economy in Iran is next to bankruptcy,
* Iranian authorities inflicted the Lake Urmia disaster by building more than 40 dams to desiccate it but making climate change the scapegoat for the disaster, crushing any voice of protest, and pumping disinformation at an incredible rate to Azerbaijanis.
* Azerbaijani aquifers are subjected to a serious level of depletion without any management.
* The list is huge but the above is sufficient for now.

**Response to Question-5**

There are plenty of barriers to undermine the Azerbaijani culture and inflict damage to the viability of the nation of Azerbaijan in Iran. To this end, the Iranian authorities are proactive and contrive any conceivable plot against Azerbaijanis in Iran. A few examples are presented below to illustrate the problem:

* The provisional Trade Chambers in Azerbaijani provinces promote investments in Isfahan as opposed to doing so in Azerbaijani provinces.
* We have documented how Iranian authorities have prevented humanitarian aid from reaching Azerbaijani victims of earthquakes.

**Response to Question-6**

The Iranian authorities are not minded in any way to grant any sectoral or territorial autonomy to the nation of Azerbaijan in Iran. Everyday life is full of evidence but we suffice to mention the following evidence:

* Azerbaijanis have tirelessly campaigned for the right to education in Azerbaijani Turkish and those from 2003 to 2010 are collected in [www.anadili.com](http://www.anadili.com/), which comprise 100s of campaigns signed by 1000s of individuals. This is just the tip of the iceberg. However, the Iranian authorities did not bother to respond to even a single one of them!
* Ever since 2010, Azerbaijanis have organised several protests most of the years and by now, we have witnessed up to 20 major protests to call for the restoration of Lake Urmia. However, Iranian authorities have repressed the protests, prosecuted the environmental activists and imprisoned them but never implemented a single restoration measure other than disinformation. The lake was desiccated in 2023 and since then misinformation has amplified.

To grasp the reality, the question needs to be transformed into the understanding of the mindset of the Iranian authorities in terms of several attributes, including:

***Outlook of Political Arena in Iran*:** The Iranian government is a medieval construct with institutions resembling contemporary outlooks. In Azerbaijani provinces, the political arena comprises the Iranian government, Azerbaijani activists and the masses with the following prima facia indicators:

* The State apparatus deploys criticism levelled by Iranian politicians against one another but never questioning the Supreme Leader or any constitutional matters. The criticisms in the political arena are normally *charades* and stage-managed, by which Statesmen carefully diffuse poor performances of the government by trivializing issues or introducing irrelevant issues. Criticisms are normally meant for making a storm in a teacup but never resolving or discussing alternative solutions to any social, cultural, economic or environmental problem!
* The activists are targeted by Iranian authorities to be trapped in a system as per *prisoner’s dilemma*, where Azerbaijani individual activists are encouraged towards conflicting outcomes with rewards of freedom towards their partial ideals. In this way, conflicts are seeded among them and those compliant ones are unaware of sleepwalking towards invisible traps and their likelihood to be caught up in a gagging order for the rest of their life.
* The members of the public in any country, including Iran, may be accused of lacking critical thinking but those in Iran are effectively trapped through *learned helplessness*. This explains the increasing number of protests in Azerbaijani provinces and Iran, which act as per their internalised grievances, although the setup is that their voices are doomed.

***Absence of the culture of* *good governance*:** Governance, defined as shared decision-making through the participation of stakeholders, is completely missing from the Iranian discourse, including:

* Inclusivity is excluded from Iranian policymaking, as literally no one talks about it
* Participation, as a principle of good governance, is faked in Iran and therefore in some projects faked participation for propaganda purposes.
* The concept of rights is drastically transmuted in Iran and what should be legally guaranteed as rights are persistently *discretionary* in Iran. So, matters of rights are heavily abused in Iran.
* The opposition in Iran is as guilty as the government, as any Azerbaijani demands their rights for Azerbaijanis in Iran, they are immediately labelled as pan-Turkist or separatist by the Iranian tribalistic activists.
* Iranian politicians will become diabolic when topical issues turn into the full list of rights conferred by the UN particularly the issue addresses the right to self-determination
* Iranian discourse is highly sensitive to establishing checks-and-balances in the country.
* These are a glimpse of things that are not right.

***Attributes of the Iranian Way of Governing in Modern Times*:** Now that the Iranian discourse has no bearing towards good governance, it is relevant to understand some of its attributes, which explain the way their violations of human rights are made invisible. These include:

* Iran is infested with collusion between the Ministry of Justice and every other ministry department (legislation, execution and justice).
* Arbitrary law practices and arbitrary decision-making are endemic in Iran, as challenges are immensely counterproductive and often dangerous. As such, there is no culture of independence of lawyers. This explains the way the Iranian Constitution and laws are violated under the supervision of the Supreme Leader and hence the endemic collusion.
* There is no culture of independent auditing data and accountability.
* The so-called Iranian pseudo-democracy is not a democratic system for ensuring equal opportunities for everyone but a window-dressing system to conceal the infection of the system with cronyism, oligarchy, and multiple instances of multi-billion corruption with no effective prosecutions.

**Concluding Remarks**

The issue is that Iranian authorities failed in their duty to protect the nation of Azerbaijan in Iran and therefore by definition Azerbaijanis have no protection. ArcDH looks forward to new developments by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues to lay down a new procedure, whereby specific minority nations, such as the nation of Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani provinces in Iran are not quashed by a sophisticated authority, such as that of the Iranian authorities, driven by singular race and religion.