



51e session du Conseil des droits de l'homme
(12 septembre – 7 octobre 2022)

Date : 16 Sept. 2022

Assembly resolution

This is the Resolution related to the Assembly before Palais des Nations in Geneva to demand the Restoration of Lake Urmia. The Assembly was organized by ArcDH on 16 September 2022. It expresses the agreement that the current state of Lake Urmia, being on the brink, is the sole responsibility of the government of Iran.

The risk exposures are as follows. Lake Urmia forms the heart of Azerbaijan in Iran but 95% of its surface area has been forced to dry up since 2000. It leaves behind some 10 billion tons of salt, to act as the source of the new phenomenon of salt storms in the region with grave impacts.

Iranian politics is as follows. The government blames the catastrophe of Lake Urmia on droughts, climate change or other flimsy excuses. Yet, even according to the former head of the Department of Environment, only 18 % of this disaster is caused by climate issues. He attributed the remaining 82% to human errors, mismanagement of water resources, construction of numerous dams on the rivers and thousands of deep wells around the lake.

The roots of the Lake Urmia disaster are as follows. The dams and water projects constructed by the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran bear the main responsibility for the disaster. These ministries cut off all the flows to the lake and let it disappear by evaporation.

The will of Azerbaijanis about Lake Urmia is as follows. The rapid fall of Lake Urmia during 2000-2010 alarmed Azerbaijanis with popular protests since 2010. The government in Iran pretended to listen to the people and their pressure and therefore established the *Urmia Lake Restoration National Committee*. Their action plans were supposed to restore the lake by 2022 to its past ecological status. But their action plan turned into talk shows and meetings for the sake of meeting. Nothing happened and no single project was implemented.

The hard realities are as follows. The Iranian government pays lip service to the people to restore Lake Urmia but carries on with cutting off the flow to Lake Urmia; encourages inefficient water resources projects, depletes aquifers; exploits natural resources for hard cash through the big business of selling water and minerals of the lake. Now, the people realize that the government of Iran is not minded about restoring Lake Urmia.

The Resolution is an appeal to the UN as follows. This Assembly is the initiative of the Arc (Ark) Human Rights Association. Here are a group of environmentalists and Azerbaijani activists who rallied together to bring the alarming situation to the direct attention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other responsible international organizations specifically the United Nations Environment Program. The participants are largely stakeholders and come originally from the region at the periphery of Lake Urmia with their families living in the region. Now, every Azerbaijani in Iran knows well that Lake Urmia is indispensable for their sustainable future.



Below, the following Resolutions and Action Plans are agreed by the Assembly and brought to the attention of the United Nations Human Right Council and other similar organizations:

1. The Assembly agrees that if it took approx. 20 years for the forced drying of Lake Urmia, it would also take another 20 years to rectify the past wrongdoings and ensure its restoration if the Iranian government stops cutting off the equitable share of Lake Urmia (30 billion cubic metres), as the scientific evidence is that rainfall patterns and the annual rainfall over the basin remain statistically the same.
2. We appeal to you to make a formal representation to the Islamic Republic of Iran to stop cutting off the minimum flows to Lake Urmia, the amount of the necessary flow which was determined by the partnership of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2012.
3. Independent authorities are required to monitor the flow of the equitable water share of Lake Urmia; to defend the flow to Lake Urmia and to defend the Azerbaijani at-risk population.
4. The Azerbaijani at-risk population is now exposed to untold health risks, including:
 - Exposed to cancer and respiratory diseases
 - Suffer from financial losses and damage to properties and infrastructures
 - The at-risk population are turning into Internally Displace People
 - Impacts on flora and fauna due to the desertification at the periphery of Lake Urmia.

All these are direct impacts of the policies of the Iranian government, who bears responsibility for all. We highlight that the Iranian government is not gathering any statistical data on these impacts and other adverse effects.

Geneva

16 September 2022

Association for the Defence of Human Rights of Azerbaijanis of Iran “ArcDH “
and participants of the Assembly