



L'Association pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des revendications  
démocratiques/culturelles du peuple Azerbaïdjanais-Iran - « ARC »  
Special Consultant Appointed by the UN ECOSOC

## **The Resolution of Azerbaijan Human Rights Activists Gather in Front of the United Nations**

We, human rights activists of Azerbaijan, have gathered today in front of the United Nations office in Geneva in the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council to make the voice of the Azerbaijani nation in Iran heard by the world. We declare that even though Azerbaijani Turks make up one-third of Iran's population, they do not have the same rights as the ruling nation of Iran also believed to have the same proportion of the population. As such, Azerbaijanis are discriminated against by the Iranian government in all economic, social, cultural and linguistic sectors.

Azerbaijanis not only deprived of the right to education in their mother language, but since two years ago, the Iranian authorities have been implementing the racist plan of the "Sufficiency of Persian Language" in Azerbaijani schools, as a prerequisite to Azerbaijani children enrolling in preschool. As such, they have to take a Persian language test and if they cannot speak Persian, they are discriminated against and sent to underdeveloped classes.

Azerbaijan is a fertile land and has huge underground wealth, more than half of Iran's copper and gold is extracted from Azerbaijan's mines, but the government does not make any investments, does not create employment in industrial infrastructure, and exports raw Azerbaijan and materials. Azerbaijanis find themselves forced to migrate for work; and the region is exposed to the risk of brain drain and migration of both skills and human resources.

Due to the government's indiscriminate and unscientific exploitation of the region's natural resources, the environment of Azerbaijan is in crises. Lake Urmia, which was until recently the second saltwater lake in the world, has dried up by 95% and turned into a seasonal pool. The drying up of the lake and the destruction of the environment have led to the destruction of agriculture and animal husbandry in Azerbaijan, and many villages have become empty and people have moved to the outskirts of the cities.

Azerbaijanis were subjected to economic sanctions by the Islamic Republic of Iran, for opposing *Velayat-e-Faqih* immediately after the revolution in 1979, through suppressive measures, so much so that their roles in political power were reduced to a minimum. They are subjected to a systemic discrimination and now they are effectively excluded from Iranian governance.

The public protests that started in September 2022 against the mandatory hijab for women, resulted in the death of more than 530 protesters by repressive security agents and 29 thousand people were arrested and imprisoned. It showed the dictatorial and repressive nature of the government towards the people. Non-Persian nations participated in these protests in Iran, including Azerbaijanis, and suffered disproportionately in terms of detentions, wounded and killed individuals.

The Iranian government regards the demands of Azerbaijanis as a matter of security against the country and applies the most severe form of oppression against Azerbaijanis. It considers any of their economic or political demands as opposition to the government and an act against the



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security of the country. Subsequently, they resort to the imprisonments of the protestors in the most severe manner and subject them to torture. Azerbaijanis within the country have no freedom of expression and no right to protest and therefore Azerbaijanis abroad take on themselves to bring the demands of the nation into the international agenda.

We, the participants here in front of the United Nations office in Geneva, rally here and announce clearly the demands of the people of Azerbaijan in Iran in the following terms:

- The Azerbaijani Turkish language must be reinstated as the official language of Azerbaijanis; and serve as the language of education in all educational stages. Azerbaijani culture and language must be respected and forced assimilation must be terminated immediately.
- The right of Azerbaijanis to self-determination must be ensured; policies conducive to oppression and expediting their discrimination must be repealed; legal instruments must be in place to punish any perpetrator denigrating any minority nations, any minority and the vulnerable.
- All the political and civil prisoners of Azerbaijan who have been imprisoned for defending the education in the mother language or demanding national rights must be released immediately; and freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly for everyone must be ensured through law enforcement institutions.
- The natural resources of Azerbaijan must not be plundered; raw materials must not be transferred outside Azerbaijan; increasing poverty and general unemployment must be prevented by creating mother industries and expanding infrastructure.
- Urmia Lake must be restored using sound science; the destruction of the environment must be stopped; polluting water resources must be prevented. These measures are the first step to halt a process, as a result of which the native Azerbaijani Turks find themselves condemned to emigration from Azerbaijan.

On behalf of Azerbaijani demonstrators in front of the United Nations office in Geneva  
23 March 2023