



Association Arc pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des revendications démocratiques/culturelles du peuple Azerbaïdjanais-Iran - « ArcDH »

Special Consultant Appointed by the UN ECOSOC

Dear Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Current Situation of Azerbaijani Provinces in Iran

Year in, year out, the 30 million nation of Azerbaijan in Iran demands social justice, employment, and reinstatement of the official status of Azerbaijani Turkish. But what do they get? All they get is the label of separatism, pan-Turkism, and worsened socioenvironmental conditions! Now I want to explore the breadth and depth of the issue.

The injustice suffered by Azerbaijanis is caused by discriminatory policymaking in Iran. As a result, the nation of Azerbaijan suffers from economic, social, environmental, cultural and political discrimination. Similar processes are also impacting other national, ethnic and religious minorities.

Iranian authorities violate international conventions by removing the Azerbaijani identity from our culture and forging a false national identity. This aggressive policy is inflicted against the identity of most of the other minority nations and ethnic groups, and so the Iranian authorities think they can conceal multinational and multicultural compositions and diversity in Iran.

Azerbaijani women and girls in Iran are disproportionately impacted by poverty, ethnic prejudice, unemployment, social exclusion, and discrimination. Social injustice and governmental laws encourage misogyny against Azerbaijani women. Lack of employment, stemming from both discriminatory policies and misogyny, is evident everywhere.

Textbooks in schools bear the mark of racism, xenophobia and make our children wonder about their identity and worry about their future. My heart bleeds as I bear witness that Azerbaijani children are forced to study in a language even at 5 years old in preschool that they do not speak at home or streets. The Iranian authorities violate even their own laws by not implementing Article 30 of its Constitution, which requires free education for everyone and Article 15, which requires the use of the mother language in education and other institutions. The Azerbaijani Turkish language is subject to humiliation and insult in schools and the official media.

Azerbaijan is rich in resources and natural wealth. However, Azerbaijanis do not see any benefit from them as the Iranian authorities convert the Azerbaijani natural resources to hard cash without reinvesting any proportion of them at their sources in Azerbaijan. Even taxes are not



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paid to local authorities in Azerbaijani provinces to compensate for the damage. The Iranian authorities exploit minority nations and exclude them from any decision-making.

We all witnessed the killing of children, women and young men in the recent few months for their peaceful protests against the mandatory hijab. During the protest movements, many women and girls detained in Azerbaijan cities were badly treated. We interviewed many families with young daughters of age 15-16, who were imprisoned in makeshift detention centres outside prisons. They were subjected to violence, and some were even abused sexually. Our reports to the UN gave the names of at least 761 detainees during the protest, 400 in Tabriz alone. Also, of the total, almost 400 were women. Unfortunately, the Iranian media boycott the voice of Azerbaijani Turks and failed to help the voice of Azerbaijanis to reach the world. But our organization heard their voices and reported them to the United Nations.

Azerbaijani girls are now deprived of education in their mother language and quality education, as many are likely to drop out of education for fear of gas poisoning at their schools.

Everyone normally failed to underline the fact that the protests were stronger among women in minority nations in recent protests. This is because they are at the brunt edge of injustice in Iran and therefore, they are better placed to understand injustice. The status of women in Iran is a secondary citizen but that among the minority nations are twice secondary, for being a woman and for belonging to a minority nation.

Discrimination in every sector of Azerbaijani economics is commonplace and this has undermined employment in Azerbaijani territories and given rise to migration and internally displaced refugees. It is well-known that provincial Commerce offices in Azerbaijani provinces promote Azerbaijanis to invest in Esfahan, Yazd or Kerman at the expense of their home cities.

One of my greatest fears is that the future generation in Azerbaijani provinces will not have a safe natural environment to live. This is because the discriminatory policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran have already given rise to a poisoned atmosphere, polluted rivers and contaminated aquifers. The aquifers are being depleted due to inept management. Lake Urmia was forced to dry up and now it has shrunk to 95% of its surface area giving rise to salt storms. The Iranian authorities attribute this to climate change and drought but this is wrong. Also, they have no plan to tackle climate change or droughts.



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Human health in Azerbaijani provinces is at risk due to the discriminatory policies of the Iranian authorities. Some of the causes include a poisonous atmosphere due to burning black oil, a polluted environment and rivers, contaminated water resources, and poorly treated domestic water supplies. The poor are unable to afford medical care. The impacts of increased risks are wide and include cancer and skin cancer, acute respiratory problems and various eye symptoms.

The voice of the nation of Azerbaijan in Iran is to demand their full rights as recognized by the UN towards social justice and good governance. Iranian authorities should listen to these voices but not conspire against them and stop inciting racial tension in some of Azerbaijani cities.

Thank you for your attention.