



## Center for Balochistan Studies

United Nation's Human Rights Council Forum on Minority Issues  
Second Session, Geneva 12-13 November 2009  
Minorities and Effective Political Participation

*[Greetings and Gratitude]*

For the sake of brevity and time, without further ado, let me begin by posing a challenging question to the Forum; I will then explain the relevance of the question in the context of discrimination against Baloch people in Iran. Finally I will briefly outline my recommendations to the Forum. The question is how do we effectively ensure that a state whose life-long disdain of international law, its abysmal record on human rights and compliance with international covenants, declarations and treaties, can be persuaded to accept and implement the recommendations of this Forum? Sadly the Islamic Republic of Iran is a well known culprit in this respect, although, I note, that the Islamic Republic's representative last year, at this very forum, made these remarks; and *I quote* "my country is a place of various ethnicities with a variety of cultures. . . . discriminatory approach has no effect on the laws, regulations or the existing policy making processes of the country"; *Unquote*. He further claimed, and *I quote* "The religious minorities in Iran are free to perform their religious education"; *unquote*. He goes on to makes grandeur claims and promises that neither exist nor ever materialize. As the Irish philosopher Edmond Burke once said "Hypocrisy can afford to be magnificent in its promises; for never intending to go beyond promises; it costs nothing".

It is a well known fact that discrimination in Iran is institutionalized through the Constitution. Officially prescribed oppression and blatant discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion against the Baloch, Kurds, Arabs and others, along with religious intolerance and bigotry against religious minorities such as Baha'i's, Jews, and even Sunni Moslems are established facts of life. Women are second class citizens according to various laws in Iran. As an example, Iranian regime's policy in Balochistan and for that matter in other ethnic provinces too, is based on racial discrimination, assimilation, linguistic discrimination, religious prejudice and inequality, brutal oppression, deprivation and exclusion of the ethnic people who are indeed the majority in their own respective provinces and regions. The Baloch like Kurds, ethnically, religiously and linguistically are distinct from Persians or Farsi speaking Shiite Iranians. The systematic, historic and institutionalized inequity and blatant bias have in effect paralyzed the Baloch people in making meaningful public participation, in access to employment, education, health, property ownership, housing, social welfare, media and cultural life. Consequently the Baloch, Kurds and Turkmen who are also Sunni Moslems along with other religious minorities and all women of Iran are deprived by law to be elected to high offices such as presidency.

My recommendations are firstly following the example of OSCE in 1992, **UN should establish an Office of High Commissioner for Minorities**. Secondly good faith in dealing with regimes like Iran ought to be replaced with firmness and corroboration. Thirdly an Independent expert on minority issues or a representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should visit Balochistan and other respective provinces in Iran. Fourthly, Iran must be asked to stop current harassment and imprisonment of the Baloch religious leaders, and fully respect the independence of Sunni religious schools and institutions. Fifthly, an Independent monitoring group should be set up too. Finally Iran should allow the relevant bodies such as the UN and Organization of the Islamic Conference to examine and report religious and ethnic discrimination in Iran.

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