

Third session of the Forum on Minority Issues

ORGANIZATION: **International Kurdish Union**

AGENDA ITEM: **VI Discrimination and positive measures/affirmative action**

SPEAKER: **Mr. Loghman Ahmedi**

Madame President,

We are deeply concerned at the ongoing economic, social, political and cultural discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran.

The Islamic Republic pursues a deliberate policy to keep Iranian Kurdistan economically underdeveloped; For example, Kurds are not permitted to pursue economic projects above a certain budget in the Kurdish provinces. This limits full, active and equal participation of Kurds in daily economic life and leaves the region severely under-developed.

A widely used practice which discriminates against ethnic Kurds is an ideological test called *Gozinesh*, meaning selection. *Gozinesh* is used to select candidates for any state sector job, whether as a teacher, factory employee, shop worker or parliamentary candidate. This practice limits employment opportunities for Kurds and other groups as an ongoing marginalisation strategy.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has constitutional provisions that safeguard the use of languages other than Farsi. In practice this is not the case, and this reality limits the academic and economic development of the Kurdish people.

Religious and gender-based discrimination is sanctioned by the constitution, which results in second-class citizen status for millions of Iranians, including the majority of the Kurds. The constitution prohibits Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, Bahai or women from occupying important governmental positions including that of the President.

In addition, democratic recourse to change these discriminatory economic policies is removed from Kurdish groups, since Kurdish political parties are banned in Iran and membership in a Kurdish political organization, or even the expressions of sympathy for them is punishable by several years in prison, torture and even execution.

Every year, several hundred Kurds are sentenced to prison on charges of affiliation with Kurdish political parties, many of whom undergo unfair trials. Activist's family members and even friends are fired from their jobs as a result of their political activism.

With increasing frequency, Kurdish journalists, writers and human rights activists are summoned to interrogations, threatened, arrested, tortured, sentenced to long-term prison sentences and fired from their jobs.

Iran is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights but find its articles are frequently contravened. The regional national minorities express frustration with the highly centralized nature of economic planning, which is implemented through the central-controlled provincial bureaucracy and leads to a growing economic and social gap between ethnic regions and Persian-dominated regions of Iran. A first step would be full adherence to this Covenant and full implementation of its articles.

Thank you!