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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the International Educational Development, Inc., a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 May 2010]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The human rights situation of the Kurdish people in the Islamic Republic of Iran*

The Kurdish people have been subjected to a severe political repression, serious discrimination and ethnic cleansing since the declaration of the “Holy War” in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini. The following is a brief review of some of the methods used by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to suppress the Kurdish people.

1. The political and economical situation of the Irani Kurdish people.

While Iranian Kurdistan is, in terms of natural resources (oil, agriculture, minerals), one of the richest regions of Iran, along with Ahwaz (territory of the Arab minority), a report published in April 2006 by the United Nations shows that this area is one of the most discrimination and impoverishment in the country. Resources from the area are taken by government authorities or those contracting with the authorities, leaving little or nothing for the area’s Kurdish population. The Persian areas such as Shiraz, Abada, and Teheran enjoy the wealth from these resources.

The Iranian authorities have carried out both “dekurdistanisation”¹ and “white genocide”² since it came to power:

- “Dekurdistanisation”:

Because of the economic looting of the regions resources, and because the authorities do not invest in developing enterprises or infrastructures, Kurdish youth must leave Kurdistan with their families to find employment. Non-Kurdish Iranis relocate in the Kurdish areas to manage the exploitation of the resources, and increasing control the economy in the region. This becomes a type of ethnic cleansing, with the Kurdish population scattering and fragmentizing and the numbers of Persian settlers into Kurdish areas increasing.

- “White Genocide”:

The term “white genocide” is applied to the practice of distribution of addictive drugs like cocaine and opium to Kurdish youth. According to Mahdi Badri, the phenomenon of drug addiction affects one out of five families in Kurdistan and is spreading to Kurdish villages that were previously drug-free.³ In this region, the Iranian authorities do not arrest dealers; rather, they recruit them and provide them with drugs.

The goal of such practices is twofold: keeping the Kurdish youth away from Kurdish political movements and creating a spy system inside the families. Indeed Ittela’at (the Iranian Intelligence Services) uses this method to obtain information about the active members of Kurdish political and civil movements: it is easier to obtain information from people under addiction – even more when they are provided with drugs. Kurdish political leaders have practically no political space to address this and other pressing problems the Kurdish people face as they are labelled “terrorists” or “treasonist” by the authorities and essentially live in fear for their lives.

* Association of Humanitarian Lawyers, Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran , NGOs without consultative status also share the views expressed in this statement.

¹ Journal Kurdistan, n. 421, 2007, p.11.

² idem

³ BADRI Mahdi, Drug Spread in Iran and East Kurdistan, Erbil, Edition Khani, 2007, p.54.

2. Language discrimination.

Under the article 15 of the Iranian Constitution, the official language is Persian. However, the Constitution allows the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools. However, this Constitutional right to language is not respected by the authorities, and, in fact, the Kurdish language is not or cannot be taught in schools, the Kurdish newspapers are regularly closed down, and Kurdish journalists arrested. Even the use of Kurdish in governmental instances is impeded. In this regard, on the day before she was executed, Ms Shirin Alam-Hooli wrote:

“My language is Kurdish, the language that I use to communicate with my family, friends and community, and the language that I grew up with. But I am not allowed to speak my language or read it, I am not allowed to go to school in my own language and I am not allowed to write it. They are telling me to deny my Kurdishness, but if I do, that means I have to deny who I am.”⁴

3. Prisoners and the death penalty.

Many of the persons receiving the death penalty in Iran are Kurdish activists. According to the Kurdistan Human Rights Organisation as many as 80 % of executions in Iran are of Kurdish activists. We note the following 5 persons were executed in the Evin Prison (Teheran) on May 9, 2010 : (1) Farzad Kamangar; (2) Ali Heydariyan; (3) Farhad Vakili; (4) Ms. Shirin Alam-Hooli ; and (5) Mehdi Eslamiyan.⁵

We also note that Ms. Alam-Hooli’s case was still on appeal, so took place with no final judgement. According to Iran’s own laws this execution was illegal.

4. International action

It is obvious that the authorities have no intention of improving the situation of the Kurdish people in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is also obvious that the Kurdish people are unable to fight back in any way against the oppression without risk of arrest and even the death penalty. In these circumstances, the international community has an obligation to engage in actions on behalf of the Kurdish people. We urge the Council’s mandate holders to address this situation. We also urge the Council itself to undertake effective measures to ensure that the practices of the government cease. Finally we urge the High Commission, the Secretary-General as well as Member States to act in unity and decisively to promote and protect the human rights of the Kurdish people in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

⁴ www.medyanews.com, 10 May 2010.

⁵ www.medyanews.com, 10May 2010.