

Speech by Dr Asso HASSAN ZADEH, Iranian Kurdistan, "Chil Chira" Alliance

The effective participation of minority communities requires that a number of preconditions must be satisfied, which in the case of the Iranian Kurds and under the Islamic Republic are virtually absent today. In my view, these conditions should be considered broadly, and shouldn't be limited to what one could say are traditionally the most commonly mentioned political human rights.

First of all I would like to speak about the recognition of plurality within the state. The state should not only have a positive assessment of cultural differences, but should also be the home for all ethnic groups, both in law and in practice. The sectarian and politically discriminatory ideological foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have directly resulted in citizens generally being denied the opportunity to effectively exercise their participatory rights, penalise Iranian nationalities above all. This way, due to their ethnic, religious and linguistic characteristics and their historical aspirations for freedom, the Iranian Kurds find themselves excluded from the decision-making process. Regarding the official recognition of minorities, if admittedly articles 15 and 19 of the Constitution refer to the existence of ethnic groups and minorities within Iran, this in no way amounts to real and effective recognition, and even less so for the Kurds. Despite some symbolic gestures, the Kurdish identity is reduced to mere folklore by the system and the authorities.

Next, there is the issue of citizenship under certain preconditions. Admittedly, Iranian Kurds do not experience the difficulties faced by Syrian Kurds in terms of access to citizenship. Equally however, because of widespread deliberate and institutionalised discriminatory practices, Iranian Kurds are in practice only second, even third class citizens.

Finally, and obviously, we must mention the political human rights that are associated with the right to public participation, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of association. Mr Chairman, according to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in cases concerning Turkish Kurds, freedom of expression for minorities includes the right for members belonging to that group to advocate for a constitutional structure that fosters effective participation of minorities. Yet, even today we see dozens of journalists and civil society activists such as Mr Kemal Sharifi, who serve lengthy prison sentences because they publicly expressed their support to national rights for Kurds. The same applies to the freedom of forming organisations. The regime does not tolerate any genuine opposition parties and all Kurdish political parties such as the Kurdish Democratic Party are banned in Iran. The same is true for NGOs, whose leaders are often arrested and prosecuted, such as Mr Kaboudwand, President of the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan. While completely suppressing any opportunity for dialogue and free public space on issues relating to Kurdish participation, the Iranian regime also imposes a climate of security and militarises Kurdistan. The pretext of territorial integrity and national security has become a means to execute Kurdish activists from time to time in order to invoke fear among the rest of the population. This is particularly the case in the current post-presidential election climate. Out of the thirteen activists sentenced to death, one 26 year old man named Ehsan Faahian was executed in Sanandaj prison just 24 hours ago.

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