

Dr Karim Abdian Item III and IV

Thank you Madam Chair,

Madam Chair I represent the Arab minority in Iran of Ahwazi Arabs in South West Iran.

Madam Chair, Iran is a multinational country composed of Turks, Arabs, Persian, Kurds, Beluch and Turkans. But only Persian and Farsi language, which is native only to a third of the population is the sole official language. Arabic and all other minority languages are banned. Therefore denying the non-Persian minority their linguistic rights. Thus making them non-competitive in the job-market. We recommend that minority languages be taught at least through the elementary school in these areas. [...] Ahwazi Arab minority are not allowed to run their own affairs and lack local and general national representation. They face a systematic forced assimilation, ethnic cleansing, and confiscation of the lands and property. Iran does not recognise or acknowledge their existence. Nor does it provide any statistics or data on the minority issues. It is common knowledge that education is an important element in poverty reduction and economic participation. Among Ahwazi illiteracy rate is four time the national average. So it is no surprise that the unemployment is six times the national average. As they cannot compete economically due to their inability to speak, read or write in the so-called official language.

Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1999, 1.2 million Ahwazi have been forcefully displaced into central provinces while 1.5 million indigenous Persians are relocated into government funded re-settlements. Over 450 000 hectares of Ahwazi farm and land have been confiscated and given to non-indigenous Persian settlers, as a keen design to change ethnic structure and racial mix of the province. Madam Chair while the water right and housing right have been explicitly recognised in the ICCPR, during the past 6 years Iran constructed 4 dams: [Machu Suleyman, Dez, Arun, Gatvand] on Karun river and diverted its waters from Arab province of Arabistan to Persian provinces of Isfahan and Rafsanjan. Karun is the largest river in Iran that runs through the Arab majority of Khuzestan and Arabistan provinces. Diversion of Karun River has taken place despite the objection of the United Nations Environmental Program in June of 2007. Diversion of Karun caused millions of Ahwazi Arab minority fishermen the loss of property and livelihood. On 11 June 2003 3 Ahwazi farmers were shot to death by Iranian security forces for resisting the building of diversion dams on their property. Ahwazi Arab ancestral land produced over 4.5 million barrels of oil daily; and funds about 90 per cent of the Iranian economy. Yet they live in object poverty. Thank you Madam.