

Written and oral declaration of the **Association for the Human Rights of the Iranian Kurdistan–Geneva (KMMK-G)** on the guarantee of Kurdish women’s rights from the Iran part of Kurdistan at the 4<sup>th</sup> Forum on minority issues.

**Item V:** Women belonging to minorities and their effective participation in the economic, social and cultural life

Madam President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank you in the name of the “Association for the human rights of the Iranian Kurdistan – Geneva” for offering us this opportunity to speak about the violence and discrimination faced by Kurdish women in Iran.

Kurdish women in Iran suffer multiple discriminations. During the last three decades, the situation of Kurdish women has been strongly affected by the laws of Iran which are based on “Sharia”, the Islamic law, and by the discriminatory policy of the Iranian government in all fields of life.

Young Kurdish girls living in rural areas do not have proper access to higher education because of the socio-economic discrimination they face. For example, they are obliged to go to school and study in Persian, the only officially recognised language in Iran, instead of their mother tongue, which is Kurdish.

State universities also use discriminatory conditions to limit admission of Kurdish students. This obviously leads to a negative effect on their participation in both the economic and political life.

Women are deprived of their strictly personal rights; they are obliged to wear the hijab, which means that exposing any part of the body except for hands and face is punishable with 70 whip slaps and up to 60 days of imprisonment. Moreover, the obligation to wear the Islamic veil is contrary to the Kurdish traditional dress code, which is much more liberal.

Right now, numerous women’s rights activists such as Ms. Parvin Ardalan, Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi are in prison for having claimed to be in favor of equal rights in the family, rights to marriage and divorce, hence questions regarding daily life.

In addition to the practice of stoning adulterous women, another cruel and inhuman practice exists in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran against Kurdish female inmates. Based on the testimonies of victims, young virgin girls are raped before being executed by the forces of “Pasdaran”, which are the guardians of the revolution. According to the logic and religious ideology of the Iranian authority, virgins go to heaven after their death. In order to prevent them of going to heaven, military forces rape these prisoners, thinking that they will thus go to hell.

This practice is clearly against Article 7 of the International Covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR), which explicitly forbids “torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments”.

Moreover, the Iranian authority applies the practice of gozinesh against the Kurdish population. This practice is used to marginalize the Kurds by clearly refusing them access to work in the public sector, as well as in some parts of the private sector. Such a process infringes upon the principle of equal chances and treatment for Kurdish women who try to find work in these sectors. It must also be underlined that the State is by far the main employer in Iran.

To conclude, the discrimination Kurdish women face in Iran require urgent measures, such as the efficient use of the Kurdish language in public life and the modification of laws restricting the participation of women belonging to minorities and in general of minorities in the economic and political life.

The Association for Human Rights in Iranian Kurdistan – Geneva believes that discriminations against women and minorities in Iran will not diminished without an intervention of the international community. Thus we urge the United Nations, the international community and this Forum to act together and put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran to ratify the Convention on the elimination of discrimination of women and to take effective measures to protect the human rights of the Kurdish people and of all minorities in Iran.

Geneva, 29-30<sup>th</sup> of November 2011