

Oral and written declaration from the KMMK-G at the fifth UN forum on Minority Issues.
27-28th November 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran-Geneva, I would like to draw the Forum's attention to the issue of native language teaching in Iran, which constitutes a barrier to Kurdish children developing their personality. Native language represents one of the fundamental rights of the UN Charter. According to this Charter, this right belongs to every human being. A language should not become a political tool to repress a population. A language is both a method of communication and a method of reflection. Various studies show that studying in their native language has significant effects on school children's progress.

What's more, the native language plays a key role in the construction of a nation's identity. Depriving the children of a nation of tuition in their native language means depriving them of their basic identity.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kurdish language is not recognised as a national language. No school books exist in Kurdish. From primary school level, Kurdish children are obliged to learn Persian. Their native language is used exclusively in oral communication. In schools, children are obliged to speak to one another in Persian. The Kurdish language is forbidden.

The non-recognition of the Kurdish language in Iran is in fact a discriminatory policy of the Iranian regime, aimed at weakening the Kurdish language and assimilating the Kurdish nation. In this way the Iranian regime, in imposing the Persian language on Kurdish children, wishes to obliterate the Kurdish identity from Iran. In other words, this is a problem with political and ideological dimensions.

The recognition of language is important for a nation's progress and cultural development. According to article 15 of the Iranian constitution, other peoples in Iran can use their language in the local newspapers and the media, but this is unfortunately not respected in practice. Under the Islamic regime, dozens of Kurdish newspapers and magazines have been forbidden. Dozens of Kurdish writers and intellectuals active in Kurdish socio-cultural spheres have been arrested and imprisoned.

In conclusion, we present the following recommendations:

1. We ask the Forum to demand that the Iranian state ends its political marginalisation of the Kurdish people in Iran and recognises the Kurdish language in schools for Kurdish children.
2. We ask that the Islamic Republic of Iran stops shutting down Kurdish publications and prosecuting Kurdish writers, intellectuals and journalists.

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