

ARC Culture, Cultural Association and Democratic Advocacy for the people of South Azerbaijan (Iran)

Madame President,

For the Turkish and Azerbaijani Ahl-e Haqq minorities in Iran, the basic minority rights to practice religion are not respected. The 4 million Ahl-e Haqq make up the largest religious minority. Yet, not only does the Iranian Republic not officially recognise them, it also shows them only disregard and humiliation and deprives them of their rights as citizens.

In protest to the threat to their religion and beliefs, some people have gone so far as to sacrifice their lives.

Indeed, on the 27th July 2013, Mohammad Ghanbari – a 22 year old member of Ahl-e Haqq, and resident of Qazvin in the north of Iran, set himself on fire in front of the Islamic Parliament, to protest against the government's inability to respond to the complaints of this religious minority. After having suffered serious burns, M. Ghanbari died in the Shahid Motahari hospital in Tehran.

On the 4th and 5th of June 2013, Hassan Razavi and Nimkard Tahari separately set themselves on fire for the same reason before the main administrative office in the towns of Hamedan and Kermanshah.

Several people have been dismissed from their jobs for belonging to the Ahl-e Haqq religion, such as the lawyer Mr Seyed Mohammad Akbari and teachers like Syavoche Hayati, among others.

27 year old Safer Faraji, resident of Karaj, was arrested and sent to prison for several days where he was insulted and humiliated when his moustache, which is considered sacred for the Ahl-e Haqq, was shaved off.

Bakhsh Ali Mohammadi, Sahand Ali Mohammadi and Ebadollah Ghassem Zadeh, all three Ahl-e-Hag prisoners, were transferred from Urmia prison to Yazd prison. These three Ahl-e-Hag prisoners were moved to two different prisons and sentenced to 15 years in prison and fines of 400 million Tomas because they defended their religion before the Regime's military attacks.

Since 2004, Younes Aghayan, another Ahl-e-Hag prisoner was sentenced to death. There is serious worry today about the probability of his sentence being applied, despite his innocence.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;..." Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- The execution of Younes Aghayan and other innocent people should be called off.
- The IRI should officially respect the beliefs of the Azerbaijani people, Ahl-e Haqq and other religions in Iran and should stop harassing them.

- The Islamic Regime of Iran should respect international covenants and put an end to all discriminatory practice against ethnic minorities and non-Muslims.

Jaleh RAZMI

President

Azerbaijani Association Arc Culture