

## Statement of the Association for Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran

Madame President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Iran is not only a multi-ethnic country, it is also a multi-religious country. Apart from the Shiite Muslims constituting the great Sunni majority. In addition, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and Yarsans all have a long history, of a hundred or even thousands of years, in Iran.

Unfortunately, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not recognized this reality. In contrast to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international conventions proclaiming the equality of all human beings, discrimination against and repression of religious minorities are on Iran's agenda. This discrimination are the result of the ideology of the Iranian government, which is based on the idea of the superiority of the Shiites, as well as on the legal order of the country with different legal norms and consequently different treatment for Shiite and non-Shiite citizens within the country.

The Iranian Constitution does not recognise minorities, such as the Baha'is and the Yarsans, and it neither contains guarantees in favour of them.

Iranian criminal law had long been applied different penalties for Muslims and non-Muslims accused of the same crime: for instance, compensation for death to the family's victim was lower if the victim was not Muslim.

In the country, religion is always a criterion for preventing marriage between members of the various religious communities. Iranian law prohibits marriage between a Muslim man and a woman belonging to unrecognized communities, and a non-Muslim who wants to marry a Muslim must necessarily convert to Islam.

Conversion to Islam is desirable and favoured by the Iranian government, whereas the conversion of a Muslim to another religion is prohibited and even punishable by death. The conversion of a Muslim (to another religion) causes, according to Iranian law, the dissolution of marriage as well as the unbelief of one of the partners.

Ms President,

These laws and ordinances clearly disagree with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guaranteeing "everyone shall have the right to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice" and prohibiting "any form of coercion" in religious matters.

Regarding the Kurdish minority in Iran, the members of the Kurdish minority are treated by the authorities of the Islamic Republic as second-class citizens. As a result, the Kurds in Iran are doubly discriminated against and repressed: firstly, for ethnic reasons because they are Kurds and not Persians, and secondly, for denominational reasons, since they belong either to the Sunni branch of Islam or to the Yarsan faith.

All religious minorities are deprived of state and superior administrative functions. Their children are forced to attend schools which teach the country's official religion, the Shiite religion, and schools are in principle run by the Iranian Shiite authorities.

In conclusion, in Iran, discrimination against religious minorities occurs in several ways. Such discrimination requires urgent action and it is only through the sincere recognition of equality of all human beings and the modification of all laws that discriminates against the religious and ethnic minorities of the country that religious freedom can be guaranteed in Iran.

The Association for Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran believes that these discriminations do not cease without the attention of the international community. We call on the United Nations and this forum to act together to force the Iranian government to meet its obligations arising from the international conventions also ratified by Iran.

Association for Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran, Geneva