

## THE ZAGROS HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER

Oral Declaration of the Zagros Human Rights Center on the situation of minority groups in Iran, for  
the Seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues  
Geneva, 25-26 November 2014

Mr President,

On behalf of the Zagros Human Rights Center I would like to draw the attention of the Forum on the situation of the minority groups in Iran. **The scale of repression against ethnic minorities and national groups in Iran is alarming.** All over the country, hundreds of political prisoners and civil representatives of ethnic minorities are currently imprisoned in Iran, dozens are sentenced to death.

According to the recent data, more than 40 % of the prisoners in Iran are Kurds. However, the Kurdish minority represents only about 15 % of the Iranian population. The activists are accused of belonging to the Kurdish political parties opposing the Islamic Republic of Iran, of threatening the national security or of disseminating anti-government propaganda.

From the **economic perspective**, Iranian Kurdistan ranks among the most underdeveloped regions in Iran with an unemployment rate largely exceeding the national average. Concerning the environment, the World Health Organisation has classified the two Kurdish cities of Sanandaj and Kermanshan among the 10 most polluted cities in the world.

Landmines are yet another scourge in the region. According to various sources, between 1988 and 2011 in the provinces of Western Azerbaijan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Sanandaj and Khouzistan, 2433 civilians were killed because of abandoned weapons and in landmine explosions, and 5601 people were injured.

When it comes to **cultural discrimination**, despite the fact that the Article 15 of the Constitution of Iran stipulates that, apart from Persian, a limited use of the ethnic minorities languages and alphabets is allowed in media and at schools, in practice, it has never been the case and the Islamic Republic of Iran has done nothing to implement this regulation.

In Iran, Kurdish parents are not allowed to choose Kurdish names for their children. Today, many of the Kurdish parents are obliged to choose two names for their children, a formal and an informal one, or to pay a considerable amount of money to the State officials who eventually accept Kurdish names that the parents chose for their children!

Thank you.