

**Statement by**  
**H.E Ambassador Gharibabadi**  
**Deputy Secretary General of the High Council for Human Rights**  
**Islamic Republic of Iran**

**9<sup>th</sup> session of the Forum on minority issues**  
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**In The Name of God**

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran sets forth legitimate rights and freedoms for various language, religious, racial and ethnic groups in 24 articles, including equal rights for all people of Iran from any ethnicity or tribes and equality of all before the law. Against what was raised by a few in this forum, ethnic groups are not minorities in Iran, but they form the majority of the country. The Iranian territory has always been home to a variety of ethnic and religious groups. Under, Article 15 of the Constitution, Farsi is the state language and script; yet, use of the local and ethnic languages in the media including the press and their teaching in schools is permitted and encouraged. It's worth mentioning that, for example, Kurdish and Azeri are taught in universities also.

The high and effective position of ethnic groups in all national decision-makings, including in the cabinet, parliament, city councils, Assembly of Experts and administration of provinces is a clear demonstration of deep belief towards equity and national unity in Iran. For example, there are many high ranking officials among Azarisi, Kurds, Arabs and etc as vice-president, minister, president of the supreme national security council and so on.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

With respect to some references made by certain groups on ethnic communities, I shall emphasize that my country is proud of all its citizens, meanwhile they have done their utmost efforts for the progress and development of the country and protecting it. While the Iranian noble ethnic groups were constantly defending their country during imposed war, they

always raise this big question that where those individuals and so-called NGO's who claim that are representing them, including in this forum, have been? Our nation is quite confident that they were and still are cooperating with the aggressor, forming terrorist groups to stay against Iranian people including ethnic groups, and pursuing separationist activities.

It is regrettable that the terrorists who have committed murder, killed innocent people, exploded public places, and carried weapons and explosives, be named as Arab, Baluch, Kurd or Azari activists. They may not and should not introduce themselves as representatives of different great ethnic groups of Iran, since they have no stance among them.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

A very mockery allegation was raised on planting land-mines by Iran at this forum. It's an undeniable and evidenced-based fact that Saddam regime planted around sixteen million landmines in an area of over four million hectares of Iran's lands during the eight years of imposed war. However, without international cooperation, over 99% of the contaminated areas were cleared by Iran itself. In this context, Saddam has also used chemical weapons against Iran including in Sardasht city which culminated to the killing of more than 13000 and wounding of 100000 innocent people.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

There is no doubt that each and every country has its own program and priorities towards a better life for its people. In the same vein, we have our dreams towards a prosperous society which the rights of all citizens including minorities were protected. In conclusion, I shall remind that there has never been a province in Iran named Arabestan and Khuzestan has always been in this name. Noble people of Khuzestan, including Arabs, have always been united and disappointed the those a few separationists who live abroad.

**Thank you.**