

## **Statelessness: A Minority Issue - Eleventh Session of the Forum on Minority Issues**

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Dear president, dear Chairman, ladies and gentlemen!

Speaking as a representative from the Azerbaijani Turkic populations living in Iran, I would like to take your kind attention to one of the outstanding but most hidden, almost taboo types of problems that is negatively affecting relations between different ethnic populations as well as between ethnic or religious minorities and the ruling majority. This growing problem is capable of making huge ethnic/religious conflicts of a type that have been earlier seen, for example, in Balkan.

This problem can produce forced population movements in larger numbers which can finally result in statelessness of so many minorities from Iran, if not a solution found now and then. This would be regarded as early warning, being subject to researches, investigations and further studies.

So, let us see what the problem is that can make minorities so vulnerable to statelessness arising from ethnic and/or religious conflicts:

The reality is that ethnic populations in Iran have been forced or programmed by the ruling systems to move to other locations to mix with other ethnic populations. This has produced overlapping interests or even ethnic land claims and geographic maps drawn based on disputed ultranationalist idealisms.

This has in turn escalated ethnic/religious tensions and disputes and hate speeches and discourse that are developing in negligence but are evident mainly in social media and public discourse. These problems have made polarized minorities that have potential for inter and intra-ethnic conflicts or in a simple word for a civil war.

Understanding such environment, the Iranian government is taking opportunity to fuel these tensions. It sensitizes ethnic cleavages, in an attempt to engage and divert minority rights into inter and intra-ethnic problems and tensions, outcomes of which are controlled, weakened and disunited minorities.

These directed attempts are part of larger deterrence doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran. When it comes to the minorities, disaster risk increases and tension-breeding initiatives among minorities have become the lead for policy-making and executive plans and acts by the Iranian government.

Ultra-Persian nationalism and its imposed monopoly over minorities in Iran have created reactions in forms of extra hate, racism and ultra nationalism among other ethnic minorities as well as between the Persian ruling ethnicity and other ethnic populations.

Ladies and gentleman,

Balkanization of Iran is not a fiction and the Iranian government plays a key role here. Minorities in Iran need a better and sincere dialogue to solve their own disputes and problem. Now, it is time to do it. Tomorrow is too late for everyone and those who can play a vital role in prevention of such disasters. Let us solve problems in peace and unite against racism and polarization.