



## SOUTH AZERBAIJANI HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear honoured members, dear attendants of the Eleventh Session of the Forum on Minority Issues focusing on Statelessness as a major human rights issue,

My name is Araz Yurdseven, representing South Azerbaijani Human Rights Centre. I am honoured to be here today speaking about the my nation, South Azerbaijani Turks, stateless, with no basic human rights and no national rights recognized under Iranian-Persian occupation which is lasting from 1925 until now.

South Azerbaijan which used be called “bread basket of the region”, under Persian occupation has become a land that millions of its inhabitants has left to live in a self-exile in other parts of Iran and other countries during the last 93 years. Most of the names of the cities, villages, areas, rivers, mountains and lands were changed from Turkish to Persian by the occupation regime of Pahlavies and so Islamic Republic. Lake Urmu, the most important factor in the ecosystem of South Azerbaijan is systematically dried up by the government by building over 30 unnecessary dams. The land where Lake Urmu was, now is a desert, creating toxic winds blowing in surrounding regions, destroying any chance of agriculture. South Azerbaijan is gradually becoming uninhabitable under Iranian-Persian occupation.

South Azerbaijani Turks, under Iranian-Persian occupation, were subjected to systematic assimilation, de-Turkification, and forced Persification. In every aspect of life, from choosing name for children, workplaces and businesses, to simple education in the mother language, and from a simple affair in the government office to the representation in the affairs of the region, everything is done in the forced and foreign language of Persian. In the last 93 years, many uprisings by people, some major, such as taking control of parts of South Azerbaijan, creating a national government for a year 1945-1946, and some minor, such as peaceful protests in the streets, writing, speaking, or meeting for the purpose of defying the occupation, all and all, were responded very harshly by the Iranian-Persian regime until now. Randomly and targeted kidnappings, arrests, beatings, torture and murder by the Iranian plain-clothed authorities are a common occurrences for South Azerbaijani Turks. At the present time,

hundreds of South Azerbaijani Turks are under torture, for crimes of using mobile apps where South Azerbaijanis meet, for speaking at an event, or for designing a calendar in Turkish.

At the present time, Mrs. Hakime Ahmadi, a very low profile human right activist, active only in the social media, is under torture, with broken ribs and tooth and beaten up badly, is the best example of extreme measures the Iranian-Persian terrorist regime is taking to respond to South Azerbaijani Turks. Let's mention here that when her husbands voiced this in the social media few days ago, was beaten up badly, with broken head, jaw and bruises all over his body.

In the last 93 years, any attempt to regain the lost self-determination and statehood by South Azerbaijani Turks were put down in bloodbath, massacres, mass exiles, and more restrictions.

In conclusion, I would like to report to you that the 35 million stateless South Azerbaijani Turks are completely deprived of their livelihood, their human and national rights, in their own land, destroyed by Iranian-Persian occupation regime. Now, the world is witnessing a gradual fading of South Azerbaijan as a land and Azerbaijani Turks as a distinct people.

I appreciate the opportunity provided to me to present our nation in this meeting.

With my sincere regards

Araz Yurdseven

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