

Item 3

Mr. President,

My name is Lamia Haouet and I am a member of the Tunisian Association for Amazighe Culture.

As a Tunisian, I am very proud of the big democratic advancements made in my country since the 2011 revolution.

However, the reality is that the rights of minorities continue to be flouted and even ignored, especially those of the indigenous people of the country, the Amazighe people who I represent here.

The Tunisian state has ratified all international charters and conventions related to the rights of indigenous peoples, but in its 2014 Constitution, it only recognizes the Arab nature of Tunisia, thereby condemning a 3000-year-old culture to marginalization and assimilation. The Amazighe language is in the process of disappearing in my beautiful country, and has been reduced to an area of 12 villages.

Despite recommendations from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 2016, the Tunisian state continues to hinder the efforts of organizations dedicated to promoting Amazighe culture and language, often using basic means. Due to a lack of funding, out of the 12 organizations that we know about, only 4 are currently active.

Mister President,

In post-revolutionary Tunisia, the study of languages is promoted from primary school: we learn Arabic, French, then English, while Italian, Spanish, German, or even Turkish are optional. In public universities, there are also Russian, Chinese, and even Latin, Greek, and Hebrew chairs. Why is Amazighe, the ancestral language of the country, not included in this list?

We recommend to the Tunisian state to take all necessary administrative and legislative measures to ensure the creation of an Amazighe language chair, to oversee the development of professors who can ensure the teaching of Amazighe at all educational levels, and to provide it with the same status as other languages already being taught.

We also recommend that textbooks be revised in order to knowledge of the history and culture of the indigenous people of the country and to quell the process of acculturation to which the Tunisian Amazighe population is victim.

Finally, we recommend to the Tunisian state to economically encourage civil society aiming to promote Amazigh language and culture.

Thank you for your attention.