

Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme

Oral Statement of the Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme

12th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

28-29 November, 2019

Item 3: Public policy objectives for the education in and teaching of minority languages

Madame Chair,

Iran is the most diverse country of the Middle-East. It is a multinational, multilingual, and multicultural state comprised of at least six main nationalities, including Arabs, Balochs, Kurds, Persians, Turks, Turkmen, and other ethnic and linguistic groups.

No ethnic group constitutes a numerical majority. However, only the Persian national group dominates Iranian society and the Persian language is the only official language of the country. Although the non-dominant, non-Persian ethnic groups represent approximately 60-65% of the population, these groups are not accorded citizenship on an equal basis, and their language and ethnic affiliation are not officially recognized.

Contrary to all its national and international obligations, the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are based on eliminating the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the non-Persian groups in the country.

The principles established in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities are quite clear, and the member states of the United Nations, including Iran, must respect them.

The Zagros Center for Human Rights demands that the Iranian government put an end to the policy of assimilation and the dissolution of different identities in the country. The right to be different must be recognized.

The Iranian government must amend the constitution of the country in order to recognize and guarantee the rights of national groups and ethnic and linguistic minorities.

Thank you.