

## **ITEM 2:**

Madame chair and distinguished members of the forum,

The root causes of minority conflict can vary from one country to another and from one reason to another. As the Association of the Human Rights for the Azerbaijani people in Iran we believe that securitization of issues such as human rights activism, defending minority rights, the right for peaceful assembly, and many other social and cultural issues put forward by the minority groups is one of the main causes of minority conflict and an obstacle for resolving it. Baseless accusations of the members of many minority groups as being “separatist” or “being a threat to the national integrity” is transforming the normal sociocultural subjects to security issues. This removes the peaceful dialogue platform between the state and society to solve any potential minority rights issues within the country and results in conflict among minorities or between the minority and state. This unnecessary process of the securitization overshadows rightful demands of the different minority groups and sometimes leads to the complete denial of the existence of minority/majority relations or minority discrimination.

Several months ago, Iranian Azerbaijani activist Akbar Naeimi was jailed in Evin Prison for his peaceful minority rights activities including his social media posts about human rights, and his activities about social issues such as holding language education classes and mainly because of his attendance and speech in an International Mother Language Day event in Iran. Peaceful demands of Mr. Naeimi for promoting minority rights were perceived as “propaganda against the state” “membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security”. One of the verdicts issued against Mr. Naeimi sentenced him to write ninety pages of handwritten research paper about the ethnic rights movement being “divisive and imperial”. The topic and references of the research paper were already decided by the court which is against the freedom of expression and speech of the country. Mr. Naeimi’s case is only one of those hundred cases that can be explored in order to find the root cause of minority conflict within highly securitized countries trying to force minorities to give up on their rights in order to establish a single identity and evade the responsibility of managing diversity.

We believe that, instead of accusing minority rights activists for being separatist or forcing them to deny the existence of minority/majority relationship, states can resolve minority conflict by

promoting the question of minority conflict and providing more opportunities for the minorities to freely present their demands.

Thank you so much.