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Dear Sir/Madam:

On behalf of the World Hazara Council (WHC), I would like to thank the panel of the 14th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues for accepting my request to present our case and to take part in this auspicious occasion.

World Hazara Council is a human right organization working to raise the issues of Hazara people in Afghanistan and the region.

WHC is working for the human rights of all people especially the Hazaras who have been historically disenfranchised in their country of origin in Afghanistan as well as neighboring Pakistan and Iran where a sizeable population of Hazaras live. We are a religious minority, although we make almost one third of the population of the country. WHC is fiercely anti-discrimination of all sorts be it religious, sectarian, regional, linguistic or otherwise. Its values and activities are based on human rights, democracy, equality, social justice, unity, peace, respect for law, and peaceful coexistence with all people. We have steadfastly worked to raise the issue of our people in any international forum. Historically, we have endured massacres, deportations, discriminations and downright racism and during the anti-Soviet war, the Mujahedin government and the Taliban reign in the late 1990s. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, even during the so-called elected governments in Afghanistan, with the international community presence, we were disenfranchised.

Now that the Taliban have re-emerged in Afghanistan, we fear a blood bath once they are fully established. The victims of any violence will be the Hazaras who are the most vulnerable in the country. During the mass evacuation which took place after the fall of Kabul, most of the evacuees were people from the groups that are ethnically associated with the Taliban. Those who needed the most help were left behind and at the mercy of the terrorists that now rule Afghanistan. Of the 127,000 people that were evacuated less than %1 were the Hazaras.

The problems of Hazaras are mostly different than those of other Afghan refugees or asylum seekers and we at WHC try to build a bridge between our people and the host nations. Our only hope is that those nations take their decisions based on facts surrounding the lives and conditions of our people and not lump them together with other migrants and asylum seekers some of whom may not have the same precarious situations as the Hazaras.

My message to the UN forum on Minority Issues are briefly as follows:

- 1- The fate of the people left behind after the evacuation is worrisome to us. Increasingly, the Taliban have been putting more pressure on the Hazaras because of their faith. There have been forced evacuation and eviction of the people from their ancestral land in central Afghanistan. In this harsh winter, our people are left to face the elements in one of the most severe winters in the country.
- 2- The current situation of food shortages reached unprecedented severity with more than 23 million people on the verge of starvation. This hunger will mostly be felt among the Hazaras who are the most vulnerable people in the country.
- 3- Any humanitarian help and support to Afghanistan, if not carried out with internationally recognized organizations especially the UN affiliated outfits, will not reach those who need them the most.
- 4- The UN as the most credible organization should refrain from recognition of the Taliban regime. We believe that the Taliban cannot, does not and will not represent the people of Afghanistan and as such they should not be given the recognition that they so obviously do not deserve.
- 5- We need to educate our young children. This can be done if the UN and other organizations can give us a hand in helping the future generation of the country. We have the people to take up this important task, provided that the international community come to our assistance.

We are ready and willing to help in any shape or form to help the people whose only hope is the international humanitarian organizations and the people in diaspora. With deep respect to this forum and to the UN organizations for their help and support to our people.

Akram Gizabi  
Chairman, World Hazara Council