

Thank you, Mr. President,

My name is Walid Ayyash, representative of the National Council for Minorities in Yemen.

There is a glimmer of hope for peace in Yemen among conflicting parties.

However there remains the issue of the religious and racial minorities in Yemen, and it is the most ignored issue by all parties.

Involving minorities in the process of building sustainable peace will result in integration, equality, and social and economic participation. It also ensures the cessation of all forms of persecution, discrimination and racism throughout Yemeni society, present and future.

Today, the Yemeni people yearn for a state built on justice, equal citizenship, freedom of belief, coexistence, acceptance of others, and one which is based on accountability, transparency, principles of governance, and respect for international laws and conventions.

Unfortunately, groups such as the Houthis and other extremists reject these principles, therefore ensuring the active participation of minorities in the peace process constitutes a real test of this ideal.

In the past year, the Houthis have carried out various acts of repression against religious minorities, in particular the arrest of dozens of Baha'is, six of whom are still imprisoned. Accordingly, we demand their immediate and unconditional release, and the release of all prisoners of conscience from all walks of life.

In conclusion, our call for minority rights stems from an inherent right to existence and freedom of choice granted by the Almighty Creator and guaranteed by international laws and agreements. These principles are the basis of global institutions, including the United Nations and this esteemed Council. In this regard, we renew our call to submit the draft international convention (on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and religious intolerance) to the United Nations for discussion and approval.

Thank you and peace be upon you.