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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Joint written statement* submitted by Europe-Third World Centre (CETIM), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP), a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2010]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Stop the repression against Kurdish people in the Islamic Republic of Iran

After the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, millions of people from ethnic minorities like Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Balouchs and Turkmens and religious minorities like Baha'is and Sunnis have been discriminated against, exploited or denied their very basic rights due their ethnicity, beliefs or different faiths. Meanwhile, Iranian civil and political activists as well as human rights defenders and students, in particular Kurdish ones, have seen arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture and humiliation on a daily basis. Many have spent months and years in prison and some have ended up being executed without access to legal representation.

Some months after the creation of the Islamic Republic, the Ayatollah Khomeini declared "Holy war" against the Kurds, who had hoped the regime change would permit them to obtain their basic rights. Since then, all the peaceful demands by the Kurds to obtain their basic rights, have been met with brutality and the Kurdish activists have been severely punished. The Kurdish people experience religious, economic and cultural discrimination.

Despite international calls to promote human rights and respect human dignity, the Iranian government has been continuing its policy of repression against civil and non-violent movements in Iran. In the post-electoral events in 2009, thousand of peaceful manifestants have been imprisoned, tortured, sexually abused, murdered or forced to leave the country.

Many of these prisoners are civil rights or women's rights activists and they include human rights defenders, teachers, journalists, women and students. The trials of these individuals have often taken place behind closed doors without a lawyer and on numerous occasions without the presence of the accused themselves.

Mohammad Sadiq KABOUDVAND, the Director of the Kurdish Human Rights Organization (KHRO), one of these activists, has been sentenced to 11 years imprisonment for alleged "propaganda against regime" and he is accused because by founding the KHRO "he has put the security of the state in danger".

In one of his interviews before the presidential election in 2009, regarding the human rights situation in Kurdistan of Iran, the Director of KHRO indicates that even though the Kurds represent ten percent of the population in Iran, the prison population is ninety percent Kurds. In fact, the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran consider the Kurdish political parties and the Kurdish organizations being enemies of the Islamic revolution. Anyone who speaks out about the Kurdish people real conditions of life is considered to be an enemy of Islam. According to the Director of the KHRO, the Kurdish political prisoners are discriminated against, compared to other Iranian citizens.

The women activists of the Azar Mehr Association, which has been striving to promote Kurdish women's status and gender equality, are not exempt from the suppression. These are women members who have been engaged in the women's rights campaign "One Million Signatures". Some of the prominent members have been sentenced to lengthy imprisonment: Hand ABDI (5 years imprisonment), Fatemeh GOFTARI (18 months imprisonment), Zainab BAYZIDI (4 years imprisonment).

There are also many prisoners who are being held without any accusation or without any verdict. Some of these prisoners are Kawa JWANMARD, Yasir GULY, Hidayet GAZALI, Sabah NASRI, Ronak SAFAZADEH, Kamran ALAYI, and Arash ALAYI.

The Iranian authorities have labelled these activists as "seditious on earth". This means that all those who are labelled with such a tag are no longer allowed to remain on earth.

Under the presidency of Mr. AHMADIHIJAD, the human rights violations in Kurdistan of Iran have increased alarmingly, and currently there are at least a dozen Kurdish political prisoners on death row. According to the International Committee against Executions, 63 political prisoners in Iran are at risk of execution. This list includes 28 people in Kurdistan, 12 people in Sistan and Baluchestan, 12 people in Ahvaz and 11 people in Tehran.

Two Kurdish people were executed in Iran in recent months and most recently Fasih YASMINI in Khoy on 6 January 2010. As of 4th February 2010, 17 members of Iran's Kurdish minority, including one woman (Zeynab JALALIAN) are on death row after their conviction of political offences and they could be executed at any time: Zeynab JALALIAN, Habibollah LATIFI, Sherko MOAREFI, Farhad VAKILI, Farzad KAMANGAR, Ali HAYDARIAN, Hossein KHEZRI, Rashid AKHKANDI, Mohammad AMIN AGOUSHI, Ahmad POULADKHANI, Sayed SAMI HOSSEINI, Sayed Jamal MOHAMMADI, Rostam ARKIYA, Mostafa SALIMI, Anwar ROSTAMI, Hassan TALAI, Iraj MOHAMMADI,

After the unrest that followed the disputed presidential election in June 2009, an increase in the number of executions in Iran has documented. Some observers attribute this increase to an execution of the Kurdish prisoners, while the whole world is focused on the events in the big cities. Others are of the opinion that, as there was less inside and outside coverage for the Kurds, the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran on one hand wants to dissuade the well organized Kurdish movement to join the current movement, and on the other hand, frightens the current movement leaders that the authorities could do the same with them.

It is worth to say that the Iranian authorities have threatened the demonstrators for being "Moharebeh", the enemy of God. Moves which appear designed to dissuade people from participating in demonstrations against the government.

In its report "Human Rights situation in Iranian Kurdistan"¹ from October 2009, the Kurdistan Peace and Development Society points out extra-judicial killings by the security forces in Kurdistan. Due to the state of martial law in Kurdistan Area of the Islamic Republic of Iran and difficulties on reporting people killed by security forces, it is hard to find statistics on the number of victims. But, according to human rights defenders in Iran and the Kurdistan Human Rights Organization, during 2009 at least 40 people were killed by security forces and more than 30 were injured. Although the victims are innocent people, the killers behind these extra-judicial executions are elements of the security apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the same report, the Kurdistan Peace and Development Society has published a list of 227 Kurdish political prisoners.

The human rights defenders and those who experienced imprisonment speak of tortures and sexual abuses as means for extracting information. In May 2008, the Kurdish political detainee Kaveh AZIZPOUR died under torture. According to the KHRO report, AZIZPOUR suffered a stroke as the result of excessive torture he endured while in custody.

We call upon the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect basic international human rights standards, to preserve human integrity, and to free all the prisoners of "conscience".

Currently hundreds of Kurdish political-civil detainees are in Iranian prisons. We ask for an urgent action to:

- eliminate the policies of national, religious and sexual discrimination
- release all political prisoners who are being held without charges

¹ <http://www.urmiye.eu/images/HumanRightsViolationinIranianKurdistan2009.pdf>

- stop the policy of sending detainees into exile and improve prisons conditions
 - put an end to the practice of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment of the prisoners
 - commute the death sentences given to political and civil activists and remove the death penalty from the Iranian constitution
 - stop the practice of trials taking place behind closed doors and meet international standards
 - reform the Iranian judiciary system and all its sub-institutions
 - allow independent Iranian and International Human Rights Organizations to monitor the Iranian prisons
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