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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[30 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Situation of the Baluchis in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Baloch people are an Iranian ethnic group residing in the province of Balochistan, which spans across the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the southeast corner of the Iranian plateau in Southwest Asia. They primarily speak Baluchi, a north-western Iranian language. The majority of Balochs are Sunni Hanafi Muslims, although there is a small Shia community in Balochistan.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are no official statistics on the exact number of Baloch people. However, it is estimated that approximately 20-25% of the Baloch population, which ranges from 3.5 million to 4 million people, lives in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The majority of Balochs reside in Pakistan, with smaller populations scattered in southern Afghanistan, Persian Gulf States, and Europe. Within the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Balochs are divided into the Makrani and Sarhadi groups, with specific regions and cities associated with each group.

Balochistan in the Islamic Republic of Iran is considered one of the poorest and least developed regions in the country. The historical annexation of Western Balochistan by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1928 marked the beginning of the Pahlavi dynasty and a centralized state structure that promoted Persian language, race, and Shiite religion as key national features. Discrimination based on ethnic differences, including the forced assimilation of other nationalities into Persian identity, was allowed under the Pahlavi regime.

Following the replacement of the Shah's government with a theocratic regime, the emphasis on Shiite religion as the state identity increased, further alienating the Baloch people who are predominantly Sunni Muslims. The unequal economic treatment of the Baloch population by the regime added to the existing distrust between the Baloch people and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its focus on a single ideal religion, has adopted a totalitarian approach towards its citizens, leading to severe tactics of oppression. This has resulted in a divide between "us vs. them" mentality, where the Baloch people have suffered from severe human rights violations. Many Baloch individuals are deprived of proper identification, which hinders their access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. Such deprivation is a tactic used to manipulate and control the population.

The Baloch people often face arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions without fair trials. Mass revenge killings of innocent prisoners are also employed as oppressive tactics. The region of Balochistan has been deliberately denied infrastructure development in various sectors such as the economy, health, education, and culture, as a means to oppress and control the region. Despite the rich reserves of land minerals and marine resources in Balochistan, it remains the poorest region. Basic necessities like clean water are lacking, leading to malnourishment and diseases among children.

It is reported that Balochistan, despite only constituting about 5% of the population of the Islamic Republic of Iran, accounts for approximately 30% of the executions carried out in the country. This cruel treatment of the Baloch people is one of many terrorizing tactics used to suppress and silence them.

In the context of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, a Baloch demonstration in Zahedan, the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) employed military-style attacks, resulting in the massacre of over 121 people⁽¹⁾. These individuals were peacefully demonstrating and demanding their basic human rights. Since the movement began, over 100 people have been executed, over 200 officially announced as injured, and approximately 300 young men and women have been detained. Unofficial numbers may be even higher, as many individuals do not have official identification or have been reported missing, and families have not been reached by media or news agencies.

Joining the weekly Friday demonstrations, which have become a ritual across Balochistan, particularly in Zahedan and Khash, is forbidden. The IRGC sets up checkpoints on roads leading in and out of these cities to suppress the demonstrations.

Despite demanding basic human rights, the Baloch people face the risk of death for exercising their rights. The IRGC's mission is to maximize damage and terrorize the people to discourage further uprising.

Since the movement began, over 20 Baloch children and women have been killed due to terrorist acts by the IRGC forces. Innocent individuals, including a 7-year-old girl who died of gas inhalation and another 7-year-old girl who was shot dead on her way to school, have fallen victim to these acts. There have also been cases of arbitrary arrests, such as the detention of two brothers aged 15 and 16, who were imprisoned for a crime they did not commit. They were kept in Zahedan Prison for over 4 months before finally being released.

Many women have reportedly been injured and are in life-threatening conditions but are too afraid to seek medical care or report their disabilities, fearing identification by the authorities, imprisonment, or even murder. Wounded civilians are denied medical care, leading to further deaths due to lack of access. Doctors who assist anyone suspected of participating in the demonstrations face imprisonment and execution as well.

We call on the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council:

- Urge the Iranian authorities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- Investigate allegations of human rights violations against the Baloch people, including arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment in detention, extrajudicial killings and political repression.
- Call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and the cancellation of execution sentences.

Baluchistan Human Rights Group, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

(1)- Iran Human Rights Society, "Names and details of 632 martyrs for freedom in Iran's nationwide protests being completed", 5 February 2023