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**RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF
DISCRIMINATION:
COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE DURBAN
DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

**Written statement* submitted by Transnational Radical Party,
a non-governmental organization in general consultative status**

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

[11 February 2005]

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

In August 2003, as the procedure of quick alert and urgent intervention on the situation of the LPDR was launched by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the rapporteur of the Committee launched the alarm on the "particularly concerning situation of the Hmongs", underlining that "20. 000 of them live in hiding in the jungle". "The Hmongs are suffering from social discrimination and are the targets of a policy of constant resettlement, which contributes to their extinction (...) No matter which article of the Convention is examined, the Lao People's Democratic Republic does not respect any of its duties", as stressed by the rapporteur (UN Press Release - CERD-63rd session-11 August 2003).

The very serious violations carried out against the Hmongs -victims of violent acts of aggression from the Lao government for almost 30 years, because of their parents or grandparents' military engagement with the United States during the Vietnam war - has only been put into light these last two years, thanks to the initiative of the international media.

Among these initiatives there can be found the report of Andrew PERRIN and Philip BLENKINSOP on the situation of a Hmong group in the Saysomboun jungle in the Spring of 2003 (Vu Agency, Time Asia, Sunday Times Magazine May 2003, Le Monde 2 June 2003), the testimonies of the European journalists Thierry FALISE from Belgium, and Vincent REYNAUD from France, as well as their guide's, the Reverend Naw-Karl MUA, an American pastor of Lao-Hmong origin, who were arrested in the North of Laos on 4 June 2003 for visiting, without authorization from the Lao authorities, a group of Hmongs in the Saysomboun Special Zone. All three were sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment on 30 June 2003, and expelled from Laos on 9 July 2003 following strong international pressure.

Another report from April 2004 by the journalist Nelson RAND should also be mentioned, as well as the BBC documentary made by the journalists Ruhi AMID and Misha MALTSEV, which was broadcasted on 27 May 2004 by the British television channel. This documentary showed for the first time to the international public the sufferings of a Lao-Hmong group chased by LPDR soldiers in the Bolikhamsay forest.

These accounts and pictures confirm the calls that have been made for several years by the Transnational Radical Party and other organizations such as the Lao Movement for Human Rights (LMHR). They describe a population - children, women, old people, men with old rifles and few ammunitions to protect themselves - which tries to survive from "roots and leaves" in the jungle, not being able to grow crops or build permanent homes for fear of being caught and killed by the enemy.

According to the several journalists, the Hmong who surrendered to the government in the hope of finding a normal life were arrested or disappeared, thus making it impossible to establish a relationship based on trust with the LPDR leaders. From September 2002 to March 2003, information coming from the inside of the LPDR and received by the LMHR match the information provided by other groups, such as the "Lao Human Rights Council Incorporation" (USA), "Fact Finding" (USA) and "Hmong International Human Rights Watch" (USA). These pieces of information revealed the attacks launched by troops of the Lao army by helicopter in the Xiangkhouang region (North), from Tha Thong and Tha Vieng to Phou Bia, killing more than a hundred women and children.

Following the testimonies of the international media, Amnesty International condemned in a press release published in October 2003 *"the use of famine as war weapon against civilians, and*

considers that this constitute a serious and clear violation of the Geneva Conventions ratified by Laos ". In the course of Fall 2004, various medias (CNN, BBC, Arte) broadcasted images of acts of maltreatment committed in May 2004 against five Hmong teenagers "killed by governmental soldiers" in the Saysomboun Special Zone. In a press release from 13 September 2004, Amnesty International called these acts "war crimes ".

Consequently, the LPDR is clearly in violation of article 2, paragraphs 1a and 1b, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which read as follows:

"a) Each State Party undertakes to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation;

b) Each State Party undertakes not to sponsor, defend or support racial discrimination by any persons or organizations;"

The Transnational Radical Party wishes to address the human rights situation in Iraq, in particular concerning the Iraqi Turkmen. The very existence of the Turkmen in Iraq is at a critical juncture today with the rapid developments following the fall of Saddam's regime on April 9, 2003. The Turkmen, in their long history in Iraq have been downgraded from being masters and rulers of entire regions to an unrepresented and forgotten minority that is under constant assimilation pressure in these days.

The Iraqi Turkmen, often confused with the Turkmen of Central Asia, live in an area that they call "Turkmenia" in Latin or "Turkmeneli" which means "Land of the Turkmen". It was referred to as "Turcomania" by the British geographer William Guthrie in 1785. The Turkmen are a Turkic group that has a unique heritage and culture as well as linguistic, historical and cultural links with the surrounding Turkic groups such as those in Turkey and Azerbaijan. Their spoken language is closer to Azeri but their official written language is like the Turkish spoken in present-day Turkey. Their real population has always been suppressed by the authorities in Iraq for political reasons and estimated at 2%, whereas in reality their number should be put between 2.5 to 3 million, i.e. 12% of the Iraqi population.

The main cities where Turkmen live are: Telafer, Musul, Erbil, Altun Kopru, Kerkuk, Taze Khurmatu, Tawuq, Tuz Khurmatu, Kifri, Qara Teppe, Qizlarbat, Qaraghan, Khanaqin, Shahraban, Mansuriyya, Baquba, Mendeli, and Bedre. A Substantial number of Turkmen also live in northeast district of Baghdad of Adhamiyya also in Aziziyya, Kut as well as Najaf and Karbala. All those areas are oil rich, which has made Turkmen the target of assimilation campaigns by neighboring Arabs and Kurds.

The exact date of their arrival into Iraq is unknown but the ancestors of the Turkmen established the principalities of Banuqlu and Batuqlu in Central Euphrates before the Islamic invasion of Iraq in the 7th century. (3) Constant migration from Central Asia increased their numbers and enabled them to establish 6 states in Iraq; 1. The Seljuks, 2. The Atabegs, 3. The Ilkhanids, 4. The Jalairids, 5. The Qara Qoyunlus and 6. The Aq Qoyunlus which were the last Turkmen state in the sixteenth century. After that they were ruled by the Safawids and the Ottomans.

Over the centuries, Turkmen played a constructive role in Iraq, either by defending the country against foreign invaders or bringing civilization. Their monuments and architectural remains exist all over Iraq. They lived in harmony with all ethnic groups around them. They administered the people with justice and tolerance. There is no record in history of any

mistreatment by the Turkmens against any of their subjects. On the contrary they became relatives with other ethnicities through inter-marriage.

However, after the British invasion of Iraq in 1918, the Turkmens began to experience a different situation. Branded unjustly as loyal to Turkey, they were removed from the administration, pushed into isolation and ignored. Then, their fundamental human rights in culture and education were violated by the closure of their schools in 1933-1937. In 1959 they were racially discriminated and their fundamental political human rights were violated by excluding them from constitutional rights given to the Kurds. On July 14, 1959 they faced mass executions by the Communists and Kurds. In the Seventies and Eighties, they were subjected to ethnic cleansing by the Baath Party.

Arab racism reached such heights that spoken Turkmen was banned in public, Turkmen names of persons and locations were changed while the historical monuments of Turkmens and Turkmen towns and villages faced destruction. Many Turkmens were relocated to southern Iraq. Thousands of Turkmens houses, lands and properties were confiscated. (4) They were even forced to change their nationality and banned from purchasing property or repairing their homes.

With the American invasion of Iraq, the Turkmens had high expectations from the interim administration established after April 9, 2003. They expected to see democracy, fairness, and an end to discrimination, the right to self-determination and an end to violence. Unfortunately, the opposite has happened.

The Turkmens, led by their political parties, The Turkmen Nationalist Movement (TNM) and the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), have expressed their opposition and have demonstrated peacefully against the new discrimination policies, on several occasions, in Kerkuk, Tuz Khurmatu and Baghdad, only to be shot at by Kurdish militias and American troops, turning those peaceful demonstrations into a blood bath. Moreover, to break the Turkmen resistance completely, Telafer which is 99% Turkmen with a population of 400,000 was attacked in September, 2003 by Kurdish militias and bombarded heavily by American forces under the pretext of foreign jihadists/terrorists, a threat that turned out to be wrong.

By not allowing the enjoyment of their fundamental right of self determination, the Turkmens may be forced to live under the mercy of other groups, who have not demonstrated a sincere desire to include Turkmens in the development of a democratic Iraq

In the recent elections of January 30, 2005, carried out in the absence of sufficient international observers, there are fears that several irregularities may have taken place in northern Iraq. For instance, according to the website Turkmenfront.org, despite the closure of registrations after January 23, 2005, 100,000 Kurds who were not residents of Kerkuk, were registered three days later with the encouragement of foreign diplomats. Apparently 400,000 people were denied their voting rights in the Turkmen region of Telafer and the Christian region of Bakhdeda (Hamdaniyya), the same website alleges that more than 100,000 Kurds were transported into Kerkuk, despite a ban on transportation, from Erbil and Sulaimania on the occasion of the elections. It seems that Representatives of Turkmens have protested to the "Independent Election Committee", but to no avail.

There is the risk that Turkmens may face assimilation pressures and Kurdification campaigns, which might deteriorate the relationship between the groups triggering armed resistance.

Therefore, it is vital and of utmost importance that the United Nations, starting from the Commission on Human Rights, get involved in the situation in Iraq, including future elections in the country.

According to The International Lesbian and Gay Association, which still has its consultative status suspended and therefore cannot contribute to the work of the UN, only two days after a speech delivered by President Lucashenko to the Belarus Security Council in early February a “non-official” gay-demonization campaign began in Belarus. The first step was the expulsion of a foreign embassy worker who, being a foreign diplomat he could not be taken into custody, but his Belarusian boyfriend was arrested on the false pretext of drug use. The story was commented on at length on government-controlled national TV with plenty of homophobic rhetoric. Apparently the point of the story was the link between homosexuality and drug use - evils coming from the European Union, the United States, and the “West” in general.

A week after this incident, another foreign diplomat was expelled from the country. In an attempt to accuse the embassy worker of paedophilia, national TV showed pictures of him in Minsk kissing other young men (allegedly younger than 14). From the images it was clear that the “boys” showed were obviously more in their 20s than teenager years.

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