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Joint written statement* submitted by Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, International Educational Development, Inc., 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.

[01 June 2025]

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



The Universal Periodic Review of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Executive Summary

This report is submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council in regard to the outcome of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The submission highlights three critical human rights concerns:

1. The systematic and institutionalized repression of the Arab population in the southwestern region of Ahwaz (Khuzestan province).
2. The Islamic Republic of Iran's military and ideological support for the Houthi militias in Yemen, which has facilitated grave human rights violations and war crimes.
3. The ongoing discrimination and violence against women and girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including legal, social, and institutional barriers to gender equality.

These issues demonstrate the Islamic Republic of Iran's ongoing violations of its international human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, which the Islamic Republic of Iran has not ratified but is still bound by customary international norms), and other human rights treaties.

I. Human Rights Violations Against Ahwazi Arabs

The Ahwazi Arabs are an indigenous ethnic population of almost 10.000.000 residing predominantly in the oil-rich Khuzestan province in southwestern Islamic Republic of Iran or Al-Ahwaz. Despite the region's natural wealth, the Ahwazi Arab population faces systemic marginalization, discrimination, and state-sponsored repression. Iranian authorities have continuously pursued policies aimed at cultural erasure, forced displacement, and socioeconomic disenfranchisement of the Ahwazi people.

1. Cultural and Linguistic Suppression

Ahwazi Arabs are denied the right to education in their native Arabic language, in violation of Article 27 of the ICCPR and the Islamic Republic of Iran's constitutional promises to uphold minority rights. Arabic is effectively excluded from the public education system. Cultural institutions, associations, and publications have been shut down or heavily censored.

Peaceful cultural gatherings are often met with intimidation or arrests, and Arab poets, writers, and intellectuals face surveillance and harassment. This state-enforced erasure of identity is a violation of the right to cultural expression and preservation.

2. Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Executions

Ahwazi activists, including human rights defenders, environmental campaigners, and student leaders, are frequently detained on vague or fabricated charges such as "spreading propaganda," "acting against national security," or "enmity against God". Detainees are often subjected to torture, including beatings, electric shocks, and prolonged solitary confinement to extract forced confessions.

The judicial process lacks transparency, and impartiality. Defendants are often denied access to legal counsel. Courts, particularly the Revolutionary Courts, hand down harsh sentences including the death penalty. In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in the number of executions of Ahwazi Arabs, many following grossly unfair trials.

3. Forced Displacement and Environmental Degradation

The Iranian government has initiated large-scale infrastructure projects and land confiscations that have displaced Ahwazi farmers and tribal communities. These projects, including sugarcane plantations and industrial zones, are developed without consultation or compensation.

Additionally, the diversion of rivers and mismanagement of water resources have led to severe droughts, water contamination, and desertification, disproportionately affecting Ahwazi communities. Environmental protests by local residents have been violently suppressed.

4. Socioeconomic Marginalization

Despite Al-Ahwaz being a center of the Islamic Republic of Iran's oil and gas economy, Ahwazi Arabs face extreme poverty, high unemployment, and inadequate access to basic services. Many neighborhoods lack clean water, electricity, sanitation, and healthcare facilities.

Government investment in the region overwhelmingly benefits non-Arab populations and military or industrial elites, deepening structural inequalities. Ahwazis are also underrepresented in political, academic, and professional institutions.

II. The Islamic Republic of Iran's Support for Houthi Militias and Complicity in Yemen's Human Rights Crisis

The Islamic Republic of Iran has played a significant role in supporting the Houthi (Ansar Allah) militia in Yemen. This militia responsible of widespread atrocities and are the main initiator of the armed conflict in Yemen. This support includes the provision of weapons, military training, intelligence, and ideological backing. The Islamic Republic of Iran's involvement has emboldened the Houthis to carry out widespread human rights abuses, contributing to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

1. Arms Transfers and Military Support

Reports by the United Nations Experts and independent monitors have consistently documented Iranian-origin weaponry, including drones, ballistic missiles, and explosives, used by Houthi forces. These weapons have been deployed in cross-border attacks against civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as in internal combat operations targeting Yemeni civilians.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's military support violates UN Security Council Resolution 2216 and undermines international peace and security.

2. Enabling Human Rights Violations by Houthis

Iranian support has facilitated the Houthis' capacity to:

- Recruit and deploy child soldiers, some as young as 10, often indoctrinated in ideology and used on the front lines.
- Impose sieges and restrict humanitarian aid, contributing to famine and malnutrition.
- Arrest, torture, and disappear journalists, political opponents, religious minorities, and civil society leaders.
- Shell civilian neighborhoods and use landmines indiscriminately, resulting in widespread civilian casualties.

The Houthis' actions, supported or enabled by the Islamic Republic of Iran, constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

3. Destabilizing Regional Impact

Beyond Yemen, the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for the Houthis has regional implications. It fuels sectarian tensions, exacerbates conflict in the Gulf, and threatens the security of international maritime routes. The Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy priorities have taken precedence over its human rights obligations, both domestically and abroad.

III. Discrimination and Violence Against Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran

1. Legal Inequality

Iranian law institutionalizes gender discrimination. Women have limited rights in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Under the Civil Code, a woman's testimony in court is worth half that of a man's, and her ability to travel or work can be restricted by her husband.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to impose a compulsory hijab law, which criminalizes women for their choice of dress. Women defying the law face arrest, fines, flogging, or imprisonment.

2. Suppression of Women's Rights Activists

Women's rights defenders have been arrested and imprisoned for peacefully protesting discriminatory laws, launching public campaigns, or engaging in advocacy. Prominent figures such as Nasrin Sotoudeh have faced harsh prison sentences for their human rights work.

The government labels such activism as "subversive" or "anti-state," using national security laws to suppress dissent.

3. Gender-Based Violence and Lack of Protection

The Islamic Republic of Iran lacks comprehensive laws to prevent and prosecute domestic violence. Marital rape is not criminalized. Women seeking protection often face institutional obstacles and stigmatization.

Honor killings and child marriages continue, particularly in rural areas, with inadequate enforcement of legal safeguards. Girls as young as 13 can be legally married, and in practice, even younger marriages are sometimes permitted with judicial approval.

4. Barriers to Participation

Women are underrepresented in political and public life. They are barred from serving as Supreme Leader or President and are often excluded from senior judiciary and religious positions.

Employment discrimination is widespread, with women facing limited job opportunities, unequal pay, and barriers to career advancement.

IV. Recommendations

The Human Rights Council, and all UN concerned bodies, should pressure the Islamic Republic of Iran to implement all the 346 recommendations in the outcome report of the fourth cycle, in order to:

1. End the cultural, linguistic, and economic marginalization of Ahwazi Arabs and ensure full protection of their civil, political, economic, and cultural rights
2. Allow education in the Arabic language at all levels and lift restrictions on Arab cultural expression.
3. Release all political prisoners and activists detained for peaceful expression or association; ensure fair trials in accordance with international standards.
4. Cease the practice of forced displacement and environmental degradation in Ahwazi territories, and provide reparations to affected communities.
5. Ensure equitable access to employment, healthcare, education, and basic services for Ahwazi populations.
6. Immediately halt all forms of military and material support to the Houthi militia in Yemen.
7. Comply fully with UN Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2216.
8. Cooperate with international investigations into violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Yemen.
9. Repeal or amend all discriminatory laws against women, including those related to family law, inheritance, and freedom of movement.
10. Abolish the compulsory hijab law and cease criminalizing women for dress-related offenses.
11. Adopt comprehensive laws to prevent and address gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence.
12. Release all women's rights defenders imprisoned for peaceful advocacy.
13. Promote women's participation in political, legal, and economic life and ensure equal access to employment and leadership roles.

V. Conclusion

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to violate its international human rights obligations through the systemic oppression of the Ahwazi Arab minority, its destabilizing role in Yemen, and the entrenched discrimination against women. The international community must hold the Islamic Republic of Iran accountable and press for meaningful reforms and compliance with its treaty commitments.

We urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to consider the grave concerns raised herein and in the outcome of the Islamic Republic of Iran's fourth UPR cycle.
