

Tuesday 13 March

Room XXI, Palais des Nations

12:00 – 13:30

RIGHTS DENIED IN IRAN

Iran's religious and ethnic minorities between marginalisation, neglect and persecution

Shirin EBADI, Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Chairwoman of the Centre for Supporters of Human Rights

Ahmed SHAHEED, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran (video message)

Diane ALAI, Representative of the Bahá'í International Community at the UN

Taimoor ALIASSI, Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran - Geneva

Nasser BOLADAI, Spokesperson of Balochistan Peoples' Party

Roya BOROUMAND, Executive Director of Abdorrahman Boroumand Center

Moderator: **Miriam PUTTICK**, Minority Rights Group / Ceasefire Centre

Despite some limited gestures of conciliation since the election of President Hassan Rouhani in 2013, Iran's ethnic and religious minorities are frequently subjected to hate speech and police intimidation, and routinely denied fundamental rights and opportunities.

Religious minorities recognized by Iran's Constitution - Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians - nonetheless face a range of legal discrimination, while unrecognized religious minorities, including Bahá'ís, Sabean-Mandaeans and Yarsanis, are left with no guaranteed protections.. Regions populated by Arabs, Kurds, Azerbaijani Turks and Balochis are underdeveloped and sidelined, with higher poverty levels and poorer health. These inequalities have fostered profound discontent and resentment, contributing, in part, to the eruption of large-scale protests at the end of 2017.

This panel discussion will be an opportunity to shed light on the current situation of ethnic and religious minorities in Iran, which represent a large part of the Iranian population (close to half of the population according to certain estimates). Panellists will give an overview of the many human rights challenges minorities face, will explore some of the motivations behind the attitudes of the Iranian authorities, and will discuss how the resulting social, economic and political frustrations have contributed to a number of recent popular protest movements which are being severely repressed.

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