

Executive summary:

1. This report reviews the situation of the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Iran, and the cultural rights of Iranian ethnic groups. Our reviews and studies on the situation of the protection of historical relics and monuments and Iranian macro-cultures by governmental and nongovernmental custodian organizations in Iran over the last few years, particularly 2010 to-date, but due to the abundance of historical and cultural treasures and the dominant social and economic conditions in the country, there is further need for protective and repair activities.

2. This report deals with the extensive welcome and cooperation of Iranian ethnic groups and NGOs and some governmental organizations in identifying, introducing and protecting of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the country and at the end some recommendations are given for further accessing of all Iranian ethnic groups to cultural rights regarding cultural heritage and move in the direction of the realization of the recommendations from the first round of the UPR.

3. Some of the recommendations are:

- a) Increasing public education on the promotion of the people's recognition of the ethnic historical and cultural heritage and their protection
- b) Setting up a body to coordinate between NGOs and GOs for the protection of the cultural heritage of the country.
- c) Further encouragement of ethnic groups to observe their traditional customs and promote these customs.

Keywords: Ethnic groups' rights, protection of historical and cultural heritage, dialogue among cultures.

About us:

4. The House of Eternal Culture is a nongovernmental organization which was set up in 2005 with the aim of establishing cultural links between Iranian ethnic groups and the protection of their cultural diversity through protection of their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. To this aim this NGO has held several colloquium and intercultural dialogues sittings, holding of exhibits introducing the cultural heritage of Iranian ethnic groups and educational workshops on the introduction with cultural rights, and also the setting up of an intangible cultural heritage virtual museum.

5. The main objective of this NGO is the introduction and protection of the rich historical and cultural heritage of all Iranians and help in accessing and realizing the cultural rights of all ethnic groups in Iran. This objective is fulfilled through the holding of an exhibit on the introduction to the cultural characteristics of Iranian ethnic groups, and conducting various researches on the common cultural roots of Iranian ethnic groups. The House of Eternal Culture plays a constructive role in assisting and advising indigenous cultural NGOs in Iran for their active presence in national and regional activities.

6. Cooperation in the founding and membership in the Coordination Council of Handicrafts Cultural Heritage and Tourism of Iran, in the secretariat related to the National Cultural Heritage NGOs Organizations is another of this NGO's activities. Also in paragraph 75 of the 2010 UPR on Iran a part of the report of this organization has been mentioned.

Pivotal Recommendations:

7. This report is prepared on the basis of the below recommendations which were made in Iran's first round of the UPR in 2010:

- a) Strengthen its efforts to include the various Iranian cultures and traditions in its national legislation
- b) Continue to promote and protect its rich historical and cultural heritage
- c) Share its experiences in the realization of the cultural rights of the people, including through diversified cultural initiatives and activities
- d) Share with regional and other interested countries its good practices regarding the protection of the cultural heritage of members of traditional minorities
- e) Continue its initiative on dialogue among cultures, in particular intercultural dialogue on human rights
- f) Continue its policies aimed at promoting dialogue among religions and civilizations, at both the national and international levels (Sri Lanka);
- g) Continue, in view of its rich history, culture and tradition, its efforts and initiatives to promote dialogue among religions and civilizations, including by focusing on the theme of promoting and protecting human rights and a culture of peace
- h) Continue its efforts to strengthen and protect human rights in accordance with the cultural values of the Iranian people

The situation of recommendations in the past, present and satisfactory future:

8. Although tending to the protection of historical monuments in Iran began from the beginning of the 19th Century, and since around 1930 became law, and the protection of the intangible cultural heritage officially began from 2007, but the occurrence of various wars and the annexation of parts of Iran by Tsarist Russia and Britain and invasion of Iran during the First and Second World Wars, and the Iraq-Iran Imposed War, various changes in the government systems, rise in aggressive cultural propaganda by foreign medias, the unequal development of cities and villages in Iran over the last century, outside agitations and spreading of separatism among Iranian ethnic groups alongside some weaknesses in cultural management have all inflicted serious damages to cultural and historical monuments and artifacts, and also not dealing with a number of cultural rights of Iranian ethnic groups. In our view it would be satisfactory if until the end of the current Iranian government's term, the legal and executive faults in the way of the protection of the country's cultural heritage and the realization of the cultural rights of Iranian ethnic groups are removed.

Data Collection Method:

9. For the purpose of showing the protection of intangible historical and cultural heritages of Iran, the House of Eternal Culture conducted personal studies, reviews the statistics for the protective activities that have been conducted by governmental organizations,

reviewed changes in laws and government decisions, monitored media reports on the preservation or destruction of these heritages and also reports of NGOs active on the subject.

Advancements:

10. Over the last four years, the protection of cultural and historic artifacts and monuments, and the situation of the cultural rights of Iranian ethnic groups have in three areas of legislative and legislative bodies, executive bodies and NGOs seen some advancements.

11. Legislative and legislative bodies: Over the recent times the Islamic Parliament for further protection of the country's cultural heritage has set up two fractions of "Cultural and Tourism Heritage" and "History and Tourism Development". In another step, the share of the Cultural Heritage Organization from the national budget has increased by 25 percent. Also for the creation of a more suitable basis for the protection of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and macro heritages of ethnic groups, the Agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNESCO Act for the setting up of a regional studies office for the protection of intangible cultural heritage of Central and Western Asia under the supervision of UNESCO, and also a number of articles from the Fourth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Program of The Islamic Republic of Iran have been amended.

12. The High Council for Cultural Revolution also for the purpose of creating a suitable basis for cultural development ratified the Naming of Days and Special Events Calendar Guidelines. Also with a rise in the technical subjects in universities and complementary education, this High Council has accepted regarding the study, protection and introduction to cultural and civilization, handicraft and tourism

13. For the purpose of further protection of the cultural diversity of Iranian ethnic groups and also protection of cultural heritage, the cabinet of ministers has increased supportive laws for determining tourism regions and has created the High Council for Cultural Heritage and tourism to replace related sub-working groups. Also it has established the Centre for Cultural Diversities at the NAM. Furthermore for the purpose of helping the restoration of historic artifacts and monuments, it has signed the agreement for accepting the nongovernmental sector costs for the provision of services and public and cultural spaces, as one of the acceptable tax costs.

14. Executive area: Due to the public acceptance of the people for introduction to the cultural roots of various Iranian ethnic groups and also the trend towards the protection and preservation of the country's cultural heritage, governmental and nongovernmental bodies and institutions, and mass medias have turned towards increasing public awareness through increasing people's attention towards macro cultures and rejection of insulting and humiliating of cultures and Iranian ethnic groups, and the Cultural Heritage Organization, handicraft industry, the national tourism and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance have played major roles.

15. In various provinces, the Cultural Heritage Organization tries to preserve and realize the local customs and traditions in indigenous regions through the registration of artifacts and monuments, preparation of brochures, booklets and education and holding propaganda exhibits. Also the national registrations of tangible and intangible cultural heritage have increased across the country and the geographic and ethnic extent is included and has gone further.

16. Over the last four years we have witnessed a 200 percent increase in the international registration of tangible historical artifacts and monuments and also a 400 percent increase in the international registration of intangible historical artifacts and monuments in UNESCO. Also the number of handicrafts works that have authenticity and quality seals on them for handicrafts have noticeably increased at UNESCO. Furthermore, the repatriation of Iranian cultural and historical heritage artifacts from other countries and the prevention of their illegal sales in other countries have proportionately increased.

17. In view of the rise in the cost of printing, the diversity in the publication of books and brochures in introduction of cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism in different regions of Iran have both had acceptable quality and quantity increase. Also in this regard, the holding of cultural festivals which the culture of indigenous Iranian ethnic groups and various nomadic people are included and have had a meaningful increase.

18. On the other hand, the Culture and Islamic Communications Organization has increased the holding of international cultural festivals among neighboring countries with a common language and culture, such as the holding of the International Nowrooz celebration in Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan and also holding of cultural festivals and exhibitions in other countries. As well as easing the publication of books related to the subject, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has promoted attention to indigenous music, ritualistic shows and Iranian ethnic groups' rituals across the country.

19. NGOs: For the purpose of the preservation of historic and cultural artifacts and monuments and further dialogue among different cultures in Iran and ultimately further guarding of macro cultures, nongovernmental organizations have increased holding colloquiums among relevant NGOs, and for this purpose they have founded the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Nongovernmental Organizations Coordination Council. Also an increase in the trends towards holding cultural rituals and ceremonies has noticeably increased.

20. On the other hand NGOs have found more tendencies towards holding arts, handicrafts and indigenous and traditional foods galleries, and holding ethnic groups cultural festivals with the cooperation of governmental bodies. Also as part of the principled and scientific preservation of cultural heritage and ethnic groups heritage, has held workshops and education courses in presence and cyberspace regarding introduction to tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and also registration of tangible historic artifacts and intangible cultural heritage at the national and international levels.

Challenges and difficulties:

21. In spite of the aforementioned advancements and the promotion of the general atmosphere of the country to this aim, there are still difficulties and challenges in this regard within the legislative bodies, executive bodies and also nongovernmental organizations that action must be taken as quickly as possible and review them and remove them.

22. Legislation and legislative bodies: Despite the laws regarding cultural heritage being old and numerous, the Islamic Parliament has not dealt with the amendment of the registration and protection of historic artifacts and monuments laws. Also the High Council for the Cultural Revolution of Iran has omitted some anniversaries from the official calendar of the country. Also in general among legislative bodies, with regards to legislation, policy setting and executive, not much has been done for further protection and prevention of the destruction of historic artifacts and monuments, and the statistics for the destruction of registered and unregistered historic and cultural artifacts and monuments is a great cause for concern. Also the Judiciary has issued verdicts on a number of the nation's historic artifacts and monuments removal from national registration due to the complaints of their owners from the Court of Administrative Justice.

23. Executive bodies: In many historical cities of Iran, the municipalities and public and government bodies have increased the destruction of unregistered historical artifacts and the historical fabric on the pretext of development. Also, the lack of the proportionate increase in the historic artifacts restoration in relation to their registration levels in the country have resulted an increase in damages and destruction of historic monuments. Also in the past 4 years the creation of new museums in different parts of the country has had a drop.

24. Nongovernmental organizations: Over the recent years due to the enforcement of complicated laws and also the lack of support for nongovernmental organizations there has been a relative drop in the formation of cultural heritage protection NGOs, and some existing NGOs have shut down and stop their activities. Existing NGOs also are faced with many problems in getting financial and human resources for their activities.

Recommendations and solutions:

24. For the purpose of the removal of the said challenges and difficulties and also more effective measures to be taken by the Iranian government towards the accepted recommendations of the first round of the UPR which were mentioned in this report, the House of Eternal Culture presents the following recommendations:

- a) Increase public education regarding the raising of the recognition of the people of indigenous historical and cultural artifacts and monuments and their protection.
- b) Increase the public budget for research and introduction of the Iranian macro culture customs and traditions.
- c) Increase the budget for the preservation and protection of the country's historical artifacts and monuments

- d) Creation of a body for coordinating between the activities of governmental and nongovernmental organizations for the protection of cultural heritage.
- e) Further encouragement of ethnic groups to keep their traditions and customs and to promote these rituals.
- f) Facilitation and easing the activities of NGOs and encouragement of people to form new NGOs.