

Executive Summary:

1. This report reviews the situation of minorities rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran/ According to our House's researches, which in the recent years and in particular 2010 onwards, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made efforts to promote the rights of minorities within society, and has tried to remain committed to the MDG, nevertheless, the subject of minorities is a subject which requires further attention. This report deals with the extensive participation of NGOs and charity institutions towards the promotion of the rights of minorities and also the raising of the public sector of education and the development of social acceptance, and ultimately recommendations for Iran to move towards the promotion of this subject and also responding to recommendations in the first round of the country's UPR.

2. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

- Raising awareness and knowledge of government institutions (legislative, executive and judicial) in treatment of minorities.
- Making the view of the government towards minorities more technical.
- Creating coordination between relevant NGOs and GOs.
- Facilitating the basis for the optimum use of domestic NGOs from the experiences of international organizations and also NGOs active in the field in the rest of the world.
- Increase government approved budgets and funds, and also increases the share of Iranian NGOs share of United Nations programmes and allocated funds.

About Us:

3. The House of Peace, Freedom and Human Rights is a nongovernmental, nonpolitical and nonpartisan institution which was founded with the aim of the promotion of human rights and humanitarian rights discourse towards United Nations, Human Rights Council and goals and programmes, began its activities in 2013, and has in the short span of time had extensive participation in the production and expansion of human rights literature at the domestic and international levels.

4. The main objective of this House is support for peace, freedom and human rights and also efforts to promote and develop war free culture, elimination of discrimination and human rights education in all forms at the domestic and international levels. This objective would reach through holding education workshops for NGOs, experts and researchers in the field, publication of relevant subjects to increase society's awareness and conducting charitable and humanitarian activities. Also through holding numerous empowerment courses for NGOs for their increased presence and promotion of their international activities, the House of Peace, Freedom and Human Rights plays a forerunning role in introducing Iranian NGOs with international human rights circles. This House also is the initiative of the introduction of the country's university students with international peace and human rights environment programme.

Pivotal recommendations:

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

- Protection of the rights of religious minorities (Denmark)
- Promotion and protection of the rights of officially recognised religious minorities (Armenia)

- Guarantee of the observation of civil and political rights for all, particularly the opposition and minorities (Chile)
- Sharing of experiences related to the protection of the cultural heritage of minorities (Armenia).

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

6. Although the subject of minorities rights influence from is the ups and downs of development, Iraq's enforced war against Iran, US imposed sanctions over the last three decades and their increase in the last six years, alongside some mismanagements have increased the issues. Considering factors such as population growth and average annual incomes, from the House of Peace, Freedom and Human Rights perspective minorities rights in Iran are at good levels compared to the average conditions around the world, which is mostly due to there being religious minority members of parliament who pursue their communities' interests.

Information collection method:

7. For the presentation of a factual picture of the situation of minorities rights, the House of Peace, Freedom and Human Rights has considered a practical method based on personal research findings, political and legislative monitoring and also media monitoring with regards to activities and actions taken in the field at hand. It must be said that interviews with religious minorities, their members of parliament in particular, are other effective ways for collecting information of this House.

Advancements:

8. The subject of minorities had made some advancement in six areas:

- Legislative area: Article 100 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, determines city and village councils, and also Clause 1 of Article 26 of the Structure, Duties and Elections of City and Village Councils Law specifies:

"Religious minorities elected to councils, must believe in their own religions and practice them, instead of Islam."

- In various periods in elections, minorities have been present in city and village councils of the regions that they've lived in.

- Employment area: Religious minorities are able to get employment in governmental and university positions. Over the last four years, a memorandum from the Selections Practical Group regarding the necessity to further observe the employment rights of religious minorities as stated in the Constitution, and according to the said legislation, the Islamic Republic government is obligated to observe the creation of equal conditions for professions and enjoyment of existing employment opportunities by volunteers, from Muslims to other religions as stated in the Constitution. Also the allocation of the hiring of 200 teachers for Christian schools is another of the improvements.

- Executive area: By allocating more resources for the promotion of minorities rights in the said time period, the Iranian government has played a special role in the improvement of their conditions. The allocation of over 120 billion Rials in this time period, for minorities' rights related activities is one of the positive measures.

- NGOs area: Over the last few years, with the increase in the number of NGOs in the minorities rights debate and their concentration on education of the people, are suitable atmosphere in comparison to the past has come about for the understanding of the people and society towards the minorities rights phenomenon. Also the participation levels and the support of charitable

individuals in this regard during the said time period are proportionately increased. Also it has to be mentioned that the communications and interactions between Muslim and minorities NGOs has had a noticeable increase.

- Sports area: help in creation, protection and preservation of cultural educational centers and specifically sports grounds, and sports are some of the specific activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the sports promotion of the religious minorities. Active sports clubs that can be mentioned are the Cultural Sports Organization and Ararat Club, Sipan Club, the sports department of the Chahar Mahal Association, the sports department of the Armenian University Graduates Society, Nairi Club, and Raffi Club, who have more extensive activities due to having arenas.

- Cultural heritage area: The Cultural Heritage Organization has also the renovation of 40 churches and other Christian Holy sites in its agenda, and has invested in this area, and for the protection of these buildings, some churches have been added to the list of national heritage sites, and some have even been registered internationally. Places like Gharreh Church in Azerbaijan Province which due to its unique architecture it is the 9th site to be registered in the country, and in the 32nd UNESCO World Heritage Conference it was registered as a historical heritage of the world.

Challenges and difficulties:

9. In view of all the mentioned improvements and the promotion of the public environment in this regard, there are some challenges and difficulties which are as follows:

- Executive challenge: unfortunately the overshadowing of the sanctions debate on the excuse of Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, on all government executive activities, it has resulted in the allocation of the budgets over the last few years, to continually reduce. This has affected the quality of the services provided in all areas, including this one.

- Social challenge: Although as stated, over the last few years great developments have been made in the society's views towards the living conditions of minorities, but again further enough concentration required on the matter.

Recommendations:

10. For the elimination of the aforementioned problems, the House of Peace, Freedom and Human Rights and also for more effective actions to be taken by Iran towards the accepted recommendation in the first round of the UPR, which were mentioned earlier in this report the following recommendations are given:

- Raising awareness and knowledge of state institutions (legislative, executive and judicial) in the treatment of minorities.

- Making the government's views of minority's rights more technical.

- Establishment of coordination between NGOs and GOs in the related field.

- Preparation of the basis for the optimum use of domestic NGOs from the experiences of international organizations and NGOs active in the field in the rest of the world.

- Increasing government approved budgets, also increases the share of Iranian NGOs from United Nations programmes and allocated budgets in this regard.