



General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 June 2016

English only

Human Rights Council

Thirty-second session

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Shia Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[27 May 2016]

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

GE.16-09369(E)



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Shia Rights Watch Advocacy for Shia in Azerbaijan

Greetings esteemed colleagues and member states,

Shia Rights Watch appreciates the opportunity to present this statement to the commission. As the mixture of identities continues to grow in the international community and becomes more and more complex, there also exists a substantiated growth in non-acceptance. In this commission, Shia Rights watch would like to highlight a detrimental need for protection for Shia Muslims, against violence on basis of religious identity in Azerbaijan. This country was chosen as an area of concern as there exists an escalating targeting of Shia Muslims.

Despite being a secular country, Azerbaijan ranked twelfth country with the most anti-Shia incidents in the Shia Right Watch 2015 Annual Report. Despite being a majority Shia nation, government forces have tried time and time again to eradicate Shia presence and to limit their religious activities.

Shia Muslims report being violated against by governmental and nongovernmental forces. Multiple raids to residence and centers of Shia community have led to imprisonment of a number of Shia Muslims. For example, a raid in the Lankaran Shia community resulted in the arrest of at least four Shia figureheads. Another daytime raid to Shia community in Bahu lead to the killing of four by police officers. Activists reported those who were arrested faced severe torture in prison. Moreover, in a series of crackdowns on Shia mosques and educational centers, nine Shia were killed and 35 others were arrested in 2015. As of today, over 150 Shia activist and 18 Shia scholars are held in detainment without charges and a number of Shia centers, such as Imam Zaman Seminary was either demolished or denied access to public.

Shia Rights Watch believes the increase in Shia rights violations are potentially consequences of an increase in Wahhabis' influence and false accusations of association to political entities by government and non- government sources towards Shia Muslims. At SRW, we emphasize that Shia Muslims are a global population, independent of geographical boundary and political influence. Thus, their religious identity cannot be associated with any political entity in the region.

Shia Rights Watch asks this commission to encourage open awareness about Shia population in Azerbaijan, emphasize the need of disassociation Azerbaijani Shia from political entities, and create an atmosphere for freedom of speech and religion in the country.

Sincerely,
Shia Rights Watch
