



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, 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.

[4 June 2012]

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

## **Health situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

In the last 3 decades the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has failed to achieve sustainable development. The excessive growth of population, poverty and unemployment due to wrong policy and strategies and bad governance have had its effects on the health situation of population. The combination of drug addictions, street children and homeless citizens, prostitution and growth of criminality, with the lack of health services for the most vulnerable part of society and in prisons has made a vicious circle that needs urgent attention.

### **Population growth and its destructive aftermaths**

The population of Iran in the three past decades has increased drastically from 33.7 M in 1977 to 70 M in 2007 this include 2.47 times growth in active population versus the 4.29 times of the inactive population.

The population growth at high rate is one of the main obstacles against social and economic development. This has created many social and economic problems in Iran including but not limited to shortage of housing, educational services, health care services and jobs.

Cultural belief is only one of the important reasons for population growth; however the encouraging policies of IRI based on bigoted ideas especially in the first decade after revolution and recently play a much more important role.

The population growth plus lack of proper investment on health care infrastructures are the main reasons that currently a major part of population does not have proper access to health care system which deteriorate the public health.

Comprehensive policy to curb population growth in the country based on the latest scientific advancements in this field plus investment in health care system. In addition the other policies which indirectly curb the population growth such as increasing the women marriage age and creating job and educational opportunities for women should be enforced immediately.

### **Drug addiction a serious social and health crisis**

The studies of “Office of Social Research” in Tehran reveal some shocking facts about addiction in Iran. Some of the most shocking ones are as follow:

The number of addicted people is estimated 1.8 Million equal to 3.25% of population, 65% of which are under the age of 35. Consumption of opium has decreased while consumption of synthetic and more dangerous drugs such as Amphetamine has increased drastically. Although in recent years the hyperinflation has crippled the economy of the country; the price of drugs has decreased. The drop of Heroin price as one of the most dangerous drugs has been more than other drugs. Around half of the prisoners in the country are those who are sentenced directly or indirectly to drug related charges.

Currently drug business is one of the most profitable criminal businesses in Iran which is supported by at least fractions of high ranked authorities in the power institutions. Political suppression, lack of healthy entertainment activities, social and economical gap between poor and rich, wide spread corruption in the legal system and law enforcement forces. Lack of public, educational, social, and legal policies to fundamentally address this social disaster, intensifies the phenomenon.

According to the views authorities the addicted people are not considered patients or individuals who need help and support, they are considered as criminals who deserve serious punishments. These views not only help to uproot the addiction but also are one of the reasons which deepen the catastrophic dimensions of the problem.

Currently addiction can be considered one of the roots of many other social ills such as health problems burglary, murder, family violence, social violence, divorce, and children abuse. From a health point of view it shall be pointed out that using contaminated syringe is one of the sources of transmission viral diseases such as Hepatitis and HIV.

We strongly believe that prevention is the least expensive way to address the health issues. This well-known medical principle is very important when dealing with addiction which mostly is not a pure medical issue and can be considered as a health problem highly related to unhealthy social conditions.

We believe that improving social security, economical security, legal protection, respect to human rights, political freedoms, creating job opportunities, proper rehabilitation programs, fighting with hopelessness are the possible and practical means that will prevent or at least lessen the catastrophic impacts of addiction problem in Iran.

### **Public mental health**

It is estimated that 20% of Iranian population are suffering from depression and other mental disorders at different levels due to harsh social conditions. This estimate is based on the reports of Ministry of Health and other reports by psychologists, psychiatrics, and social workers. Some facts about other social issues directly or indirectly related to mental disorder or harsh social and economical conditions are listed below:

- increasing suicidal rate by 17% just in one year;
- reporting 10 daily suicide in the country;
- increasing divorce rate by 9% in the first quarter of this year comparing the same period in the last year.

### **Environmental degradation and its impacts on public health**

In the year 2011 the rank of Iran between 132 countries regarding the environmental protection was 114, this rank by itself explains the bitter facts of environmental issues in Iran.

Some of the main reasons of environmental degradation in Iran are as follow:

1. Rapid population growth, maximizing profit of economical activities regardless of their environmental impacts,
2. Deforestation for various reasons such as building roads and other commercial purposes,
3. Discharging untreated sewage and industrial wastewater to rivers, lakes, and other water resources is one the main reasons of water pollution,
4. Degrading of wetlands and swamps for various reasons such as discharging untreated sewage and industrial wastewater and economic activities such as building road. Lately building a road in Minakaleh wetland divided this wetland to 2 sections, after a while the western part of wetland was dried up,

5. The high numbers of cars with non standard engine or cars without any emission control devices, supplying low grade gasoline and diesel fuel, and emission of toxic material from industries are the main reasons of very high level of air pollution,

6. Air pollution in most large cities of Iran is at alarming and dangerous level. It is one of the main reasons of heart, lung, and other related diseases in Iran.

We demand protection of environment by enforcing comprehensive environmental regulations to cover different areas of economic and human activities. This is an urgent demand and any delay to enforce such a regulation can cause more damage to public health.

### **IRI prisons the source of propagation diseases and deadly**

Below are some facts about current situation of IRI prisons:

In 1979 when the population of Iran was 36 M the number of prisoners was estimated about 10,000. In 2011 the population of the country was 72 M while the number of prisoners jumped to 250,000. This figures shows in the past 32 years the number of prisoners has increase 25 times which is a good indicator of tragic social conditions.

In one of the open sessions of Iranian parliament in answer to questions of parliament members about the general conditions and existence of infectious and other diseases in prisons of the country, the head of “Prisons Organization” clearly confessed that the situations of prisons are not satisfactory, in the situation that all of the prisons are overcrowded prevention of disease is not possible.

According to oral reports of many political prisoners drug trafficking, prostitution, selling and buying contaminated syringes are part of daily life in prisons and all of these are supported by prisons authorities and is one of the reasons of rapid transmission of viral diseases such as Hepatitis and HIV.

Lack of enough living space in the prisons is another reason of transmission of diseases and other health hazards in prisons. This is a sad and heart breaking image from daily life in Iranian prisons which is inevitable”

The other dark side of the prisons in Iran is systematic mental and physical torture especially on the political prisoners. They are under constant mental and physical torture.

During peaceful people’s demonstration after disputed presidential election in June 2009, the security forces and police arrested a huge number of people in a few days. To house these prisoners, Iranian government set up some temporary prisons. One of the most horrible and notorious ones which captured the international attention was a prison in south of Tehran called Kahrizak. The building used as prison was a storage building without any facilities to house hundreds of prisoners. The level of brutality and inhuman torture in this prison set a new shameful record for IRI. The only physician of this prison Dr. Ramin Poor Andarjani mysteriously died in November 2009.

We demand immediate changes in the situation of heath, food, and other life conditions in all prisons in Iran.