



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 June 2019

Original: English

2019 session

26 July 2018–25 July 2019

Agenda item 5

High-level segment

Statement submitted by Shia Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Shia Rights Watch would like to highlight acts of anti-Shi'ism in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The organization is concerned about the violation of rights of some Shia, those that are critical of the government or are not supportive of the Supreme leader. In the Islamic Republic of Iran clerics are expected to only function under the government's requirements, one of which is to support the Supreme leader. Any critique to him or his way of leading is illegal and subject to consequences. Also no religious group, school, entity or even media can be run independently from the government.

The government does not only arrest, pressure, and limit critiques, but also arrests their family members as a mean to create more pressure and mental torture. In March 2018, Iranian Intelligence Services attacked one of Shia's most internationally renowned scholars, Seyed Sadiq Shirazi, in Qum and arrested his son. Advocates report the forces attacked the clergy's vehicle, forced his son Seyed Hussain Shirazi, out of the car, and removed his turban degrading him in public. Seyed has been targeted many times by the same forces in the past on allegations of inciting public unrest through a critique of the government's lack of tolerance on free speech.

In October 2018, Zahra Majd, wife of Mohammad Hedayati, and her two children were arrested from the airport upon her arrival in Isfahan. Majd was transferred to an undisclosed location in Tehran. Hedayati is a vocal dissident of the regime who lives in the United States with his family.

Seyed Hassan Aghamiri is another cleric that was sentenced to 5 years in prison and is banned from wearing religious turban for the rest of his life. Arbitrary arrest and assault toward the scholar have provoked some peaceful protests in front of the Iranian Embassy in the United Kingdom, Kuwait and other Gulf countries in which Seyed has hundreds of educational, spiritual and public service centers.

Sheikh Mahdi Daneshmand was also banned from giving lectures in certain cities due to his critical comments.

The government pressures private Shia Medias such as Imam Hussain Networks that is a well-known media group that focuses on education and spirituality in different languages. The government has arrested number of their employees, seized the network's money, and closed their bank account. Some of the employees were under so much pressure that they had to flee for their families' safety.

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran aims to claim all Shia and their activities by interfering in their lives in other countries and by limiting anyone who does not support the government.

Our organization calls on the Council to di-associate Shia from specific governments, including in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to appoint a special rapporteur to address the Shia rights violations in this country.
