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

Written statement* submitted by Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

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

[5 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Mismanagement of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Natural Resources: A Call for Sustainable Stewardship

The primary duty of governments is to safeguard environmental resources, ensuring their preservation and sustainable use for the public's benefit. This stewardship is vital for maintaining ecological balance and ensuring the well-being of future generations. However, the approach in the Islamic Republic of Iran markedly diverges from this norm. The Iranian government perceives itself as the outright owner of the nation's natural resources, leading to a pattern of exploitation and degradation of these resources. This ownership perspective has facilitated practices that prioritize immediate economic gains and the interests of a select few over collective welfare and environmental sustainability. Such practices have significantly contributed to environmental destruction and heightened social disparities within the country.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the environmental crisis is deeply intertwined with systemic corruption and exploitation. This is evident in cases like the construction of a petrochemical plant near a UNESCO wildlife reserve, which was halted due to environmental concerns and dubious financial dealings. Similarly, the military organizations' involvement in infrastructure projects, particularly in water management, has led to skewed resource distribution and exacerbated regional tensions. These instances highlight not just the misuse of natural resources for financial gain but also the resulting environmental and societal fallout. The manipulation of water resources, for example, has triggered protests in provinces like Khuzestan and Sistan-Baluchestan, reflecting the broader socio-political implications of such exploitation. These examples underscore the need for transparency and sustainable development practices in the face of escalating environmental challenges.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's environmental crisis, marked by decreasing precipitation and rising temperatures, is significantly impacting its rural populations. The crisis has led to widespread internal migration, with many rural dwellers forced to leave their lands due to water shortages, drought, and other environmental challenges. This trend has been particularly pronounced in provinces like Khuzestan, Lorestan, and Sistan and Baluchestan. The resulting migration is reshaping the country's demographic landscape, with urban areas like Tehran experiencing rapid population growth and subsequent urban development challenges. This situation is indicative of broader issues related to inefficient agricultural practices and poor water management policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is grappling with significant environmental issues, including the drying of rivers and wetlands, severe groundwater depletion, desertification, biodiversity loss, and pollution. A notable example of these challenges is the water crisis in Khuzestan, historically a water-rich region, now facing acute water shortages due to mismanagement, contributing to social unrest. These environmental problems, exacerbated by climate change and policy neglect, have widespread implications, affecting both urban and rural populations and leading to socio-economic disruptions.

Environmental degradation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, marked by severe drought, water scarcity, desertification, and pollution, has led to widespread social challenges. An illustrative case is the water crisis in the Khuzestan region, where mismanagement has transformed a once water-rich area into one facing serious water shortages. This crisis has sparked social unrest and protests, underscoring the deep connection between environmental issues and social stability. Further compounding these issues is the inefficient agricultural sector, consuming a vast majority of the country's water resources despite dwindling supplies. This situation has driven significant internal migration, as rural populations, particularly farmers, move to urban areas in search of better living conditions, exacerbating urban challenges like pollution and congestion.

These environmental challenges are intricately linked with socio-economic factors, policy decisions, and broader geopolitical contexts, including the impact of economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran's ability to effectively manage its natural resources.

Climate projections for the Islamic Republic of Iran suggest significant increases in temperatures and variations in precipitation patterns, exacerbating existing environmental and social challenges. Maximum temperatures across the country are expected to rise severely, particularly affecting the central, southeastern, and desert regions.

While the overall average annual precipitation might not show significant changes, regional variations could lead to both drier and wetter conditions in different areas. These climatic shifts are likely to intensify water scarcity issues, leading to further environmental problems like land subsidence, water contamination, and increased soil salinization. The changing climate, along with human activities, is also causing noticeable land cover changes, including an increase in bare land and a decrease in vegetation. These developments underscore the urgent need for the Islamic Republic of Iran to adapt its environmental management strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Our Call to Action for the Islamic Republic of Iran focuses on several critical areas that address the intertwined challenges of environmental degradation and social issues.

Integrated Policies: Advocating for policies that merge environmental and social considerations is essential. The Islamic Republic of Iran's history of environmental degradation, a result of economic hardship, ill health, social disruption, and political unrest, necessitates the development of integrated policies that take into account the complex interplay between environmental and social factors.

Transparency and Accountability: Ensuring transparency and accountability in decision-making processes related to natural resource management is crucial. This involves promoting public participation and access to information, as well as holding decision-makers accountable for their actions.

Sustainable Development: Promoting sustainable development practices is key to addressing the environmental crisis in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This includes adopting environmentally friendly technologies and practices, as well as promoting resource efficiency and conservation.

Capacity Building: Building the capacity of local communities, civil society organizations, and government agencies to effectively manage natural resources is crucial. This involves promoting education and awareness-raising campaigns, as well as providing technical assistance and training.

International Cooperation: Strengthening international cooperation on environmental issues is essential. This involves collaborating with international organizations, sharing knowledge and expertise, and learning from best practices in other countries.
