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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 Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, 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 2024]

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



Human Rights Violations and Cultural Erasure in Balochistan's Ongoing Conflict

In the ongoing conflict between Baloch and Pakistan, forced disappearances and illegal detentions are being used against the Baloch resistance. Abducting political activists, poets, students, journalists, intellectuals and human rights activists, keeping them in illegal detention, inflicting inhuman torture and then dumping their mutilated bodies in remote and desolate areas in Balochistan has been one of the tools in the Pakistani war in Balochistan. The gross violation of human rights in Balochistan needs immediate attention and intervention from the international community.

In a crude colonial way, Pakistan is ruthlessly exploiting the natural resources of Balochistan for the benefit of ruling Punjab. The advent of China as a new colonial power in the region in collaboration with the Pakistani military is fast draining the land and sea resources of Balochistan. It has already depleted the gold and uranium, and other valuable deposits in many parts of Balochistan and the Baloch coast is nearly void of marine life, which has been the backbone of the economy of coastal regions of Balochistan for centuries. With the planned and systematic efforts by the state, the thousands of years old Balochi language is on the verge of extinction. The Baloch children are forced to adopt an alien language Urdu which has been declared as the national language of the religious state. Cultural and social traditions which are cherished by the Baloch and are essential parts of their national identity are being ridiculed by state media and in the school curriculum as un-Islamic. This is alarming as the whole existence of a people is in danger.

Anti-social and extremist religious elements organised by state security agencies in various regions of Balochistan are being used in kidnapping and dumping bodies of political activists. They are popularly known in Balochistan as the army's 'death squads'. They act in conjunction with security forces. In most of the documented cases, the perpetrators acted openly in broad daylight, sometimes in busy public areas, with apparently little concern for the presence of numerous witnesses. Several human rights activists, political and social figures, writers, singers, and poets have become victims of target killings by security agencies and their proxy death squads since the present conflict.

The verified numbers of killed and missing persons during the last 17 years are thousands. Nearly a million people have been internally displaced. Thousands have fled the country and now live as refugees in various countries. Several Baloch refugees in neighbouring Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran had been chased, harassed and even physically wiped out by assassins hired by secret services.

The security agencies pick up human rights activists, journalists, poets, doctors, teachers, political leaders, student activists, and tribal elders and keep them incommunicado for years. These people are dubbed "the missing persons". On many occasions, the mutilated dead bodies of some missing persons have been found, but the fate of thousands of such persons is still uncertain. From 2010 to 2024, the total number of missing persons is 6056. Baloch Human Rights Council has verified 467 missing persons during 2024. Out of these 33 were extrajudicially killed by security forces.

Balochistan is in turmoil. The people are living in a state of siege. The tale of blood and tears in Balochistan is continuing. In a violent response to the demand of the Baloch people for the right of self-determination, the state has unleashed a reign of terror with accompanying gross human rights violations. The Baloch are facing a brutal military operation that has resulted in unimaginable losses in men and material. Destruction and burning of the Baloch settlements and displacement of thousands are acts of terror perpetrated by the Pakistani state. In a planned way, the security agencies are trying to wipe out the cream of the Baloch society physically.

According to the United Nations General Assembly resolutions, many actions of Pakistani security forces and its auxiliary religious or extremist organisations come into war crimes. However, as Balochistan has been declared a no-go area for the international media and human rights organisations, nothing of the atrocities is reported in the international media.

The conflict between the powerful Pakistani security establishment and the helpless Baloch resistance is uneven. The Baloch, who is facing the worst of the atrocities and genocide acts, needs the help of the civilised world in a meaningful way before it is too late.
