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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 Centre for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment, 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.

[9 August 2024]

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



Social and Cultural Challenges Facing the Baloch in Pakistan

The Centre for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment would like to bring to your attention the ongoing and multifaceted challenges facing the Baloch people in Pakistan.

Balochistan, under Pakistani control, faces significant social, linguistic, economic, and political challenges. The Baloch people's rich cultural heritage and distinct linguistic identity, including their national languages, Balochi and Brahui, have been systematically marginalized. These languages lack adequate recognition and support in educational institutions and the media, leading to their gradual decline. Additionally, the state's imposition of an "alien" language and a homogenized religious identity, enforced through government institutions and extremist proxies, poses a severe threat to the unique cultural identity of the Baloch people.

The Pakistani establishment has been derisive of Baloch socio-cultural traditions from the very beginning. With the occupation of Balochistan in 1948 came a set of "alien" laws that the Baloch considered repugnant to the spirit of their Baloch traditions and customary laws. They made concerted efforts to distort and mutilate the region's history in the textbooks and publications. They imposed Urdu, the language of the Indian immigrants, as the national language of the state and the medium of instruction in schools, colleges, and universities.

After the creation of Pakistan, the strict imposition of "Islamic Ideology" to sustain the grip on different national entities and strengthen the hold of the ruling military junta over the state apparatus became imperative. The cultural traditions of a refugee group (Urdu-speaking Muhajir) were adopted as the national culture of the state, where the population of the national entities incorporated into Pakistan had languages and cultural traditions that went back many thousands of years. The imposition of Urdu as the national language and medium of instruction is also in line with strategies to dominate the languages of the Baloch and other nationalities. This policy has paved the way for the extinction of the thousand-year-old Balochi language. The imposition of socio-cultural values of a group of north-Indian refugees over cherished Baloch socio-cultural traditions is one of the ugliest of the socio-cultural aggressions.

The socio-cultural protection of a people is guaranteed in various covenants of the United Nations. In light of these challenges, we urge the United Nations to take immediately decisive actions to protect the Baloch culture and languages, ensuring that the Baloch people's linguistic and cultural rights are respected and preserved.
