



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2006/NGO/227  
7 March 2006

ENGLISH ONLY

---

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixty-second session  
Item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda

**SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS: MINORITIES**

**Written statement\* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, 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.

[21 February 2006]

---

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

## **Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey**

The Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply disturbed by the human rights situation in Iran, especially regarding the fate of the resident minorities. In the wake of Machmud Ahmadinedshad's electoral success, the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic has worsened. The Society for Threatened Peoples wishes to highlight the present living conditions of the Kurds, the Baha'i, the Christian and Mandaean minorities in Iran:

On July 9<sup>th</sup> 2005, Iranian security forces killed a young Kurdish man, Shivan Qaderi. In response to the murder, Kurds protested against the violation of their rights. During the three weeks following the violent death of Shivan Qaderi, the security forces killed at least 17 people in the Western province of Kurdistan. Hundreds were arrested, including Roya Toloui, a women's rights activist. Three people were shot dead in the town of Oshnavieh on July 26, two people were shot dead in Baneh on July 30, one person was shot dead in Sardasht on August 2, and 11 Kurds were shot dead in Saqqez on August 3. During a demonstration in Saqqez, the security forces flew helicopters low in an effort to disperse hundreds of demonstrators. According to local residents, major cities in Kurdistan remained surrounded by units of the Revolutionary Guard, and an undeclared martial law was effectively installed throughout the region for a couple of months. Violence periodically erupts in the Kurdish regions of Iran, and the situation remains tense. In early January 2006 riots broke out over the imminent hanging of the Kurd Massoud Shokkehi in the Urumieh prison and the recent hanging of another Kurd, Farhad Salehpour, 19, who was being held in Saqqez prison. A total of 51 Kurds are in detention awaiting trial as a result of being accused of sedition. They face the death penalty if convicted. According to Iranian and international human rights organisations, at least 81 people were executed in Iran in 2005.

Since the beginning of 2005, an increased number of incidents of harassment of the Baha'i community have been reported from Iran. At least 66 Baha'is have been arrested. Most of them have been released in the meantime, but at least nine remain imprisoned, including Mehran Kawsari, sentenced to three years, and Bahram Mashhadi, sentenced to one year prison, who had addressed a letter to the former president Mohammad Khatemi demanding the end of human rights violations against the Baha'is. Six of the seven others – Afshin Akram, Shahram Boloori, Vaheed Zamani, Mehraban Farman-Boraari, Shrab Hamid, and Hooshang Mohammad-Abadie – were arrested on 8 November 2005, but neither they nor the ninth man, Behrooz Tavakkoli, have been charged or tried. On 15 December 2005, Dhabihullah Mahrami was found dead in his cell at Yazd prison. He had been arrested in 1995 and was sentenced to death for apostasy in 1996. His death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1999. His family was apparently informed that he had died of a heart attack and given his body. However, Dhabihullah Mahrami was reported to be in good health shortly before his death. A heart disease that could have resulted in his death had never been diagnosed. In addition to these cases, members of the Baha'i community have been attacked by assailants. Baha'i cemeteries and holy sites have been vandalized and destroyed. Some Baha'is have had their homes confiscated by the authorities. They are generally subject to discriminatory regulations that limit their access to higher education, employment and pensions.

Christians in Iran, especially converts from Islam, have been suffering from governmental persecution since the end of the year 2005. The wave of persecution traces back to the

kidnapping and stabbing of an Iranian convert to Christianity named Ghorban Tori on Nov 22, 2005. Since then the church he had belonged to has been raided, and at least ten more Christians have been arrested. Tori was the fifth Protestant pastor in Iran killed by unidentified killers in the past 11 years. The recent massive crackdown on Christian converts according to sources from Iran was coordinated by the representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security. Some Christian leaders were said to have been visited by agents of this Ministry and warned.

The Society for Threatened Peoples is also concerned about the 10.000 Mandaean in Iran. Our human rights organisation has been informed that the Mandaean are now prohibited from performing any religious ceremonies and having any organisation. Burial ceremonies must be performed in the Muslim fashion. On February 20, 2005, a group of Muslims attacked Sayeed Khamisi with knives on the streets of Mosher, a suburb of Ahwaz. He was a 21-year-old Mandaean aged. The attackers seriously wounded the young man, then placed petrol-filled car tyres on his body and set them on fire, burning Sayeed Khamisi alive. The Society for Threatened Peoples has also received a number of reports about kidnappings of young Mandaean people and their forced conversion to Islam. These include instances when Mandaean girls have been taken from school by the authorities, forced to convert to Islam and marry Muslim men. On 5 March 2005, Nasar Zahrooni, a resident of Ahwaz and a jeweler, left his shop at 5pm. At 11pm unknown people entered his home and killed the 40 year old Mandaean. No action was taken by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in relation to the murder of Behdad Zahrooni. In May 2005, two Madaeans took part in a demonstration in Ahwaz. While the security forces dispersed the demonstration, the two young men were arrested and then disappeared. Their fates remain unknown. On 4 May 2005, the home of the Mandaean Nasar Howa Zahoori in Ahwaz was invaded by unknown assailants. They killed Zahoori by shooting him in the chest. The Iranian authorities have not investigated the killed.

These examples prove that the Iranian government is responsible for systematic and continuing violations of religious freedom. The government does not even shy away from murder, detention, torture. All religious minorities living in Iran suffer. The human and civil rights of the biggest ethnic minority, the Kurds, continue also to be breached.

### **Minorities in Turkey**

The Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the deterioration of the human rights situation in south-eastern Turkey. Our human rights organisation has been monitoring decreasing levels of religious freedom. The Turkish Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs initiated a public campaign against Christian missionary activity. High-level government officials made statements depicting missionaries as a threat. There has also been an increase in anti-Christian media coverage. Threats and vandalism against Christians and church facilities have intensified. The right to freedom of expression was violated on numerous occasions. Particularly worrying is the frequent use of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code to prosecute human rights defenders, journalists and other members of the civil society. No progress has been made in relation to the 378.000 Kurds who were violently displaced during the Turkish-Kurdish war and now wish to return to their homes.

**Deterioration of human rights situation in south-eastern Turkey - the examples of Semdinli and Yeksekova:**

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, police forces shot dead four people during violent disturbances after a press conference in Yeksekova. The victims were Ismail Bartin, Ersin Mengez, Adulhaluk Geylani ad Gyasettin Avci. Eyewitnesses reported that policemen made use of physical abuse in order to disperse people who had come together to listen to the reading of a press release regarding events that had taken place in the nearby town of Semdinli issued by the Democratic People's Party. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, residents of the town had watched two army intelligence officers who appear to have been involved in a grenade attack on a Kurdish bookshop that killed one civilian and wounded eight others. A man who attempted to escape the crime scene, a "confessor" (former PKK member who has turned state's evidence), and two gendarmes in plainclothes, were apprehended by local inhabitants. The locals handed to three men over to the police and searched the back of the gendarmes' car, where they discovered three Kalashnikov assault rifles, a hand grenade, and maps not only of the bookshop but also of an area of Semdinli where a much larger bomb had exploded on November 1<sup>st</sup>. In recent months there have been a number of bombings in this region that is mainly inhabited by Kurds. Local human rights organisations demand to know whether the security forces are to be blamed. According to a parliamentary question by the Republican People's Party, seventeen bombings have taken place since July 2005. The fact that two of the victims, Bartin and Mengez, died from multiple shots in the chest and the heart suggests that security forces were shooting to kill in Yeksekova on November 15<sup>th</sup>. According to the UN Principles the involved police forces should have used non-violent means of dispersing the crowd which had gathered after the press conference. The Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply worried about such news and considers them indicative of the deteriorating human rights situation in the Kurdish areas of Turkey.

**Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Commission to:**

- adopt a resolution condemning the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in Iran.
- send the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom to Iran to monitor the situation. The above mentioned cases of murder, detention and disappearance should be investigated in by an international and independent commission of experts.
- monitor the situation of minorities in Turkey and appeal to the Turkish government to take the necessary steps for the protection and equal treatment of the minorities living in Turkey.

-----