

UNPO CONFERENCE REPORT
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BALUCHISTAN: THE KEY TO REGIONAL SECURITY

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8 JUNE 2009

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UNPO

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) is a democratic, international membership organization. Its Members are indigenous peoples, minorities and unrecognized or occupied territories who have joined together to protect their human and cultural rights preserve their environments and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts, which affect them.

UNPO Members share one condition; they are not represented in major international for a, such as the United Nations. As a result, their ability to participate in the international community and to have their concerns addressed by the global bodies mandated to protect human rights and address conflict is limited. UNPO provides a legitimate and established international forum for Member aspirations and assists its Members in effective participation at an international level.

UNPO is dedicated to the five principles enshrined in its Charter: Nonviolence, Human Rights, Self determination and democracy, Environmental Protection, and Tolerance.

The UNPO Secretariat is located in The Hague, The Netherlands.



UNPO Conference Report

BALUCHISTAN: THE KEY TO REGIONAL SECURITY,
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1. OVERVIEW

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in partnership with Interfaith International and Baloch representative Mr. Noordin Mengal, hosted an event to discuss the deteriorating human rights violations in Balochistan during the 11th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on Monday, June 8 2009.

Balochistan is a region that makes up 44% of Pakistan's territory but also straddles Iran and Afghanistan. The region is exceptionally rich in natural resources which have encouraged exploitative domestic and external intervention. Speakers at the event included Mr. Noordin Mengal, a Balochistan National Party politician, Mr Munir Mengal, a media personality who was forcibly disappeared by the Pakistan state for 16 months in 2006, Mr Nasser Boladai from Iranian Balochistan, and Ms. Suriya Makhdoom a representative from Sindh region adjacent to Balochistan. A statement from the Khan of Khalat was read.

The session, entitled *Self-Determination in Balochistan - Its Relation to Regional and Global Security* discussed the repeated human rights violations of the Baloch, a minority community who have been politically and economically marginalized by the Pakistan Government. Mr. Noordin Mengal gave a detailed presentation outlining the violations that have taken place, including indiscriminate use of force against civilians, targeted killings and the disappearance of political activists and journalists. Many thousands of civilians are said to have been displaced across province boundaries into Sindh and Punjab and state boundaries into Afghanistan, underlining the regional and international nature of the problem.

Up to 50 representatives from Permanent Missions, NGOs and UN institutions attended the event.

2. INTRODUCTION TO TOPIC

Balochistan straddles Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, but makes up 44% of Pakistan's total territory. The region is named after the Baloch people that number 10 million and who have a distinct language, culture, tradition and liberal values.

Balochistan has a 770km long coastline and is wealthy in natural resources. It forms one of the major sources of natural gas to Pakistan. However, contrary to the promises made by national and international agents, the population in Balochistan is deprived of many basic amenities, including involvement over decisions concerning their own natural wealth.

It remains the poorest and most underdeveloped region in Pakistan. Balochistan has the highest infant mortality rate and lowest literacy rate in the region. The region is the poorest in economic terms and receives only a small share of the revenue it generates. Balochistan lacks basic infrastructure, including decent roads, power supply, sanitation and health care.



Human Rights Violations

In Pakistan, the human rights situation has been an international concern since 1947. The violations have seriously affected national minority communities such as the Baloch people.

The human rights situation in Balochistan continues to deteriorate. The Pakistani establishment has continuously suppressed, violated, and subdued the Baloch people's right to self-determination and development.

During the recent military operations (2004-2009) in Balochistan, serious human rights violations have been recorded. These include indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians, target killings, mass displacement and disappearance of political activists and journalists.

Security forces in Balochistan have committed hundreds of unlawful killings as documented in the January 2006 report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Intimidation, harassment, arrests, and torture are frequently used against supporters of the opposition. Peaceful protestors have been suppressed, political representatives have been detained unlawfully, and freedom of expression and assembly is restricted.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), the ethnic Baloch population is the prime victim of enforced disappearances in Pakistan. This practice has created an unprecedented level of fear in the society.

Torture by the state security agencies against innocent political and human rights activists is a common practice in Balochistan. This torture is, according to the HRCP, "committed with impunity".

3. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Mr. **Noordin Mengal** outlined the human rights violations committed by Pakistani state in Balochistan. During the military operation 2004-2009, these violations have been recorded by various human rights organizations. The indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the military, the disappearance and displacement of thousands of Baloch, and Pakistan's persistent policy to physically eliminate the Baloch political leaders are alarming, said Mengal. He stressed that the Baloch do not accept the illegal occupation of their land and that it is imperative that the Baloch exercise the universal right of self-determination as envisaged by the UN Charter. He appealed to the United Nations and the international community to support the Baloch nation in its struggle for freedom, dignity and sovereignty. The military presence of Pakistan allows the Pakistani Government to penetrate the religious, social, political and cultural systems of Balochistan, endangering regional and global peace, stability and security and genuine development in the region.

Mr. **Munir Mengal**, a media personality who was disappeared by the Pakistan state for 16 months, spoke about the limited freedom of movement in Balochistan. He stressed the right of all people to self-determination and nationality. According to Mengal, more than fifteen million Baloch have been denied the right to freedom since 1948 causing a serious threat for peace and stability. A struggle for political and economic equality has led to torture and disappearance of thousands. However, Mengal said, the Balochistan Freedom Movement has maintained its power by following the RAW (Relevant



assessment, Achievable plans, Winning strategies) assessment and implementation procedure.

Ms. **Suriya Makhdoom** of the World Sindhi Congress expressed her solidarity with the Baloch nation. She refers to the oppression of Sindh by the Pakistani establishment and stresses her struggle for the rights of all oppressed people of Pakistan. She highlighted the suffering and injustices of the Sindh nation by the Pakistani establishment.

Mr. **Samad Baloch** Secretary General of Baloch Human Rights Council (UK) spoke of the Baloch right to self-determination and its impact on regional and global security and peace. The right of peoples to self-determination is a fundamental principle in international law, however the illegal occupation of the land by Pakistan and Iran takes this out of the reach of the Baloch. Despite the adoption of various forms of resistance to the illegal occupation, the identity of the Baloch is under great threat. The Pakistani establishment has generated economic, cultural, social and political control. Samad Baloch emphasized that allowing the Baloch to exercise their right of self-determination will impact the global and regional peace, possibly leading to the achievement of this right by other subjugated nationalities like Sindhis, Kurds, Azeris, Seraikis and others in Iran and Pakistan. He urged the international community to get involved in the conflict between the Baloch and the occupying states as it is imperative for securing long lasting peace in the region that the unjust state boundaries should be readjusted and the divided Baloch should be united.

Mr. **Nasser Boladai** of Balochistan Peoples Party (Iran), Mr. **Abdullah Baloch** of Balochistan National Movement (Iran) and Mr. **Jamshid Amiri** spoke on the brutalities inflicted by the Iranian state in West Balochistan. Detailed accounts were given of mass arrests, harassment of Baloch people and the execution of innocent Baloch civilians in Zahidan. They said high levels of intimidation, harassment arrests and torture are ongoing in Balochistan by the Iranian state. Peaceful protests have been suppressed, political and religious leaders have been detained unlawfully, and freedom of expression and assembly is totally restricted. They exposed the brutalities and crimes committed against humanity in Balochistan by the Shia state of Iran and requested the UN to take notice of them and to support the Baloch in their struggle for sovereignty.

In a statement read by Mr. Nasser Boladai, the **Khan of Khalat** stressed the relation that the Baloch have with their land and the unity of the population. He expressed his hope for the achievement of peace and stability. Through cooperation between the Baloch and the parties surrounding Balochistan, prosperity in the region can flourish, the Khan of Khalat stated. Longing to return to his homeland, he has taken up the duty to “bring the plight of all Baloch people to the attention of the International Community.”

After the speeches, there was a brief **Questions and Answers Session** in which the attendees, amongst which were representatives of Permanent Missions and UN institutions, could ask questions to the speakers.



4. CONCLUSIONS AND STEPS FORWARD

The UNPO and the Baloch are glad to have had the opportunity to organize this event. The session aimed to provide detailed information on the human rights situation in Balochistan to agents that have shown interest in the cause of the Baloch people in the past. Thus, the attendance of the representatives of Permanent Missions, NGOs, UN institutions and other interested people was highly valued. The UNPO hopes to deepen the relations that were initiated and strengthened during the session.

The UNPO further intends to support the plans of the Baloch to organize another side-event during the 12th regular session of the UNHRC, which will take place from 14 September until 2 October 2009.

Furthermore, the UNPO is working in close cooperation with its Member towards establishing support for the Baloch in the European Parliament. To this end, an event will be organized in Brussels at the end of 2009. This event will consist of a press conference and a series of meetings with MEPs in order to raise awareness about the human rights and development issues of Balochistan and the subsequent impact on regional security.

