UNPO NEWSLETTER
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Minorities in Multinational States: Why ‘Unity in Diversity’ must prevail over ‘Unity in Similarity’

2 September 2016

“We must learn to live together as brothers, or we are going to perish together as fools” should be every multinational state’s guiding principle. Iraq is such a diverse multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious melting pot, a potpourri of Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Yazidis and other ethnic groups. Sadly, however, due to bad governance, corruption, military invasions and the rapid spread of extremist ideologies, Iraq is slowly disintegrating. The country’s multiple minority components are disproportionately affected by this tragedy. Most of them are on the verge of disappearance, as documented by a recent report co-authored by UNPO. While Iraq might be an epitome of a multinational state, the internal and external disregard for its multinational nature and the plight of its ethnic minorities, are hardly a unique case.

In numerous countries, the non-recognition and accommodation of multinationality leads to severe suffering among those who are perceived as not conforming to the imposed, often privileged, state identity. As can be seen in Iran and Ethiopia, governments of multinational states often tend to favour one ethnic group and identity at the expense of others. Following a path of repression rather than acceptance, peoples which supposedly deviate from the pan-national identity are villainised and denigrated as “backward”, “secessionist”, “violent” – generally, as not deserving of equal status, rights, and access to power and resources. In all too many cases, the respective governments unleash appalling violence and human rights violations on minorities, who peacefully seek self-determination in its broadest sense.

And this is because overall, there is still a strong resistance among states and intergovernmental organizations to address the question of self-determination – they fear the application of this principle because many times they wrongfully believe that it threatens the sovereignty and territorial integrity of existing states and, thereby, has the potential to cause tensions, conflicts and instability. The irony here is that it is the denial of self-determination of peoples; be it through cultural repression, the denial of land rights or political marginalization, rather than its implementation that is more likely to cause insecurity and conflict.

Against this background, it becomes more important than ever for states to explore sustainable solutions to accommodate multinationality. True to the concept of “e pluribus unum”, states should embrace and nurture their multinational and diverse cultures and allow for multi-facetted and all-encompassing national identities instead of forcefully trying to coerce sub-state national identities into subduing to an imposed, uniform state identity. Strongly adhering to the belief that differences – be they cultural, linguistic, religious or other – within a state do not make a state weak, but rather should be seen as the source of its strength, UNPO will continue to be an advocate for ‘unity in diversity’ and will work towards achieving better recognition and protection of the world’s minorities.
UNPO DELEGATION DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BALOCHISTAN AND BALOCH LANGUAGE BROADCASTING, WASHINGTON DC

11-15 July 2016

Mr Nasser Boladai, President of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and Spokesperson for the Balochistan’s Peoples Party, together with Mr Marvin Kumatat, UNPO representative, visited Washington DC in July 2016. During their 5-day visit, the delegation met with Members of Congress and the US Senate, State Department staff, USAID officials, as well as experts of various think tanks. Through these targeted advocacy meetings, the delegation was successful in raising awareness of the human rights situation in the Iranian and Pakistani parts of Balochistan, and promoting the establishment of Baloch language broadcasting with Voice of America among policy-makers on Capitol Hill.

The delegation clearly made headway in promoting the idea of Baloch language broadcasting among US policymakers and is particularly grateful for Congressmen Steve King’s and Dana Rohrabacher’s support in this matter, the latter publically urging VOA to initiate native-language broadcasting to Balochistan.

“BREAKING BARRIERS” WORKSHOP ON YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION, BUDAPEST

22-25 August 2016

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), in collaboration with EFAY, Left Youth of Finland and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe organized a four-day workshop in Budapest which took place at the European Youth Centre. The interactive workshop offered a platform to debate the European ‘migration crisis’ from the point of view of youth actors, and to formulate ideas for a long-term European strategy on the matter. The issue of migration in Europe was assessed and approached not from the point of view of the “managers” of the phenomenon (i.e. the politicians), but from the main protagonists’ perspectives, analysing how our societies react to this input. [read more]

UPDATE: IMPRISONMENT OF IRA MAURITANIA ACTIVISTS

Only one month after the liberation of IRA Mauritania President Mr Biram Dah Abeid and Vice-President Mr Brahim Bilal Ramdhane in May 2016, Mauritanian security forces arrested numerous anti-slavery activists, many of them members of IRA. The crackdown comes amidst growing international awareness of the plight of enslaved Haratin in Mauritania. Following weeks of arbitrary detention in inhumane conditions, the trial of the 13 IRA-Mauritania members was held on 3 August 2016. Earlier, the Court had rejected the defence’s request to release the prisoners without allowing the activists to make their case and in spite of a number of procedural irregularities that would alone justify a release. Read more by clicking here or here.

5TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD UYGHUR CONGRESS

11-13 July 2016

Uyghur activists and representatives gathered in Paris on the occasion of the 5th General Assembly of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC). The purpose of the assembly, under the co-sponsorship of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the France Uyghur Community (Association des Ouïghours de France), was to elect WUC representatives, finalize and approve a new Charter, and develop a working strategy of the organization for the upcoming years in order to more effectively raise the Uyghur issue in international fora. Read more by clicking here.
FEYISA LILESA: FROM OLYMPIAN TO SYMBOL OF PROUD RESISTANCE FOR ENTIRE OROMO COMMUNITY

In the midst of celebrating one of the chief successes of his athletics career, a silver medal at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Feyisa Lilesa symbolised the tremendous suffering of his people, the Oromo people in Ethiopia, by crossing his arms over his head in a gesture of protest. In the following days, his gesture has reverberated around the globe making headlines in many countries as one of the images of the 2016 Olympic Games. While the fate of Lilesa remains unknown as the outcome of the act of protest moves on, the gesture of solidarity has given reasons of hope to many and definitely helped raise awareness of the struggle of his people.

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), which for several years has been advocating for the Oromo and other ethnic groups oppressed by the Ethiopian regime, praises Mr Lelisa for his brave gesture and hopes that it will help convince the international community to take a bolder stance on the issue. To read more on this issue, click here.

KKF CELEBRATES 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNPO MEMBERSHIP

20 August 2016

On 20 August 2016, the Khmer Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) hosted its yearly gathering in Anncy, Savoy. On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the organization’s membership of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), the attendees, including KKF members from across Europe and North America, looked at past achievements and future challenges. The atmospheric ceremony gathered an international audience of around 50 people, and saw speeches from various European and North American KKF delegates, as well as from a UNPO representative (read more).

REPORT “IRAQ’S MINORITIES ON THE VERGE OF DISAPPEARANCE”

On 4 July 2016, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), the Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR), Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), launched a second joint report documenting the state of Iraq’s minority components since the advance of ISIS in 2014. The report, entitled “No Way Home: Iraq’s Minorities on the Verge of Disappearance”, is a follow-up report to “Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq’s Minorities since the Fall of Mosul”, published in February 2015. On 14 July 2016, the report was presented at a meeting of the European Parliament’s delegation for relations with the Republic of Iraq. Download the report by clicking here.

PROTEST AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN PAKISTAN AND BRUTAL IMPLEMENTATION OF CPEC, LONDON

28 August 2016

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), in collaboration with several Balochi and Sindhi human rights and youth organizations, organized a protest against human rights violations related to the brutal implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The protest took place on 28 in front the Chinese Embassy in London (read more).

CONFERENCE REPORT “PROSPECTS FOR MINORITY AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA: TOWARDS REGIONAL COOPERATION”

UNPO in cooperation with the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) and the Haïfa Foundation released a report titled “Prospects for Minority and Indigenous Rights in South East Asia: Towards Regional Cooperation” following a conference hosted by Urmas Paet MEP (ALDE), which was convened at the European Parliament in June 2016. The conference discussed issues associated with minority and indigenous rights in South East Asia, in particular by assessing recent developments and policies towards indigenous peoples in Taiwan and comparing the path chosen by Taipei with other Asian cases, as well as with the state of minority rights protection mechanism in Europe. The report contains the transcripts of all speeches delivered at the conference, as well as the speakers’ biographies. Download the report by clicking here.
III. UNPRESENTED DIPLOMATS WORKSHOP

8-9 September 2016

UNPO, in collaboration with Dr Fiona McConnell (University of Oxford) and Tibet Justice Centre will be organising a workshop entitled “Performing as a Diplomat”, which will take place in Brussels, Belgium, on 8-9 September 2016. This interactive workshop is the last out of three in the project “Training diplomats from unrepresented nations: capacity building for effective UN lobbying”, funded by the University of Oxford’s ESRC Impact Acceleration Account. The workshop will analyse the structure of the European institutions based in Brussels, focusing in particular at the human rights advocacy opportunities for unrepresented diplomats. Read more by clicking here.

Upcoming Events:

8-9 September: Unrepresented Diplomats - Workshop, Brussels
13-30 September: 33th UN Human Rights Council, Geneva
29 September: Women and Children in Conflict - Conference, Brussels
20-23 October: Human Rights Training for IRA Members - Brussels

33th UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL & 110th SESSION OF WGEID, GENEVA

13-30 September 2016

On the occasion of the 33rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, UNPO will partake in various side-events to raise awareness of human rights violations perpetrated against its members. UNHRC’s session is also the background for the 110th Session of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), which is made up of five independent experts from all regions of the world and whose primary task is to assist families in determining the fate or whereabouts of their family members who are reportedly disappeared. WGEID will present its annual report on the topic, to which UNPO provided input on the situation in Pakistan.

HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING FOR IRA MEMBERS

13-16 October 2016

UNPO, in collaboration with IRA-Mauritania and HIVOS NGO will be organising a human rights training in Brussels, Belgium, on 20-23 October 2016. This interactive workshop, in which several activists from different chapters of IRA Europe will take part, will focus in particular on human rights advocacy opportunities at the European Union and United Nations institutions. Participants will also visit the premises of the European Parliament and meet with an MEP and other human rights activists based in Brussels.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

29 September 2016

UNPO, together with the Assyrian Women’s Federation of Sweden (AKF) and Kati Pirsi MEP (S&D) will organise a conference at the European Parliament on the situation of women and children in armed conflict, looking in particular at the cases of the Assyrians in the Middle East. The conference will offer a platform to raise awareness of the experiences and work of Assyrian women in conflict zones, in particular against the background of the current devastating and protracted humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq. The conference will also look at examples of courageous women and positive initiatives that seeks to make an empowering difference in the lives of those affected by armed conflict. Register here by 20 September 2016.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON RECENT ETIOPIAN CLASHES

August 2016

UNPO cooperated with Ilhan Kyuchyuk MEP (ALDE), on submitting a parliamentary question to Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in response to a statement issued by her spokesperson after the 6 August 2016 outbreak of excessive use of force by the Ethiopian Security Forces against civilians in Oromia and Amhara, which left at least 97 dead.

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We rely on financial support from our Members and friends to continue our work each year. Such donations are crucial to ensure the continued full participation and engagement of a great number of unrepresented communities, indigenous peoples, minorities and occupied or unrecognized territories.

The 2012-2015 Secretary General’s Activity Report provides an overview of the activities we have been working on over the past years with the help of our partners. Please do also spread the word about UNPO or invite your friends to like our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter.