

Gilgit Baltistan: A Critical but Unknown Pivot of South Asia under Threat

**Thursday, 5th May 2011
Room A, Club of the University Foundation
Rue d'Egmont 11, Brussels**

Brussels, 26th April 2011 - South Asia is experiencing new socio-political dynamics that include spiralling economic growth in China and India, experimental state-building in Afghanistan, Pakistani ambitions for the northern occupied regions and China's growing extraterritorial influence. Against this backdrop the safety and security of the most deprived inhabitants should not be overlooked. Attentions are increasingly focused on the region of **Gilgit Baltistan**, which is contested between Pakistan, India and its indigenous people, who suffer from the self-serving policies of Beijing and Islamabad.

Gilgit Baltistan has faced fundamental human rights abuses for decades in an area that falls beyond the purview of Pakistan's civil laws and which leaves the local population lacking physical security, meaningful political representation, justice, or cultural self-determination. Exploitation of natural resources and illegal mega-projects initiated in the name of development, such as the Diamar-Bhasha Dam, are seriously threatening regional security and the region's unique natural and cultural heritage.

To raise and develop debate into these issues, the **Balawaristan National Front (BNF)** in collaboration with **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)** will convene an international conference "Gilgit Baltistan: A Critical But Unknown Pivot of South Asia Under Threat" at the **University Foundation Club** in Brussels from **14:00 - 18:00** on **5th May 2011**.

Under discussion will be Gilgit Baltistan's strategic importance as a resource-rich area located on the crossroads of China, Pakistan and India, the alarming rate of environmental degradation and what alternative governance models exist that could address these deep and damaging conflicts. The conference will take reference from UNCIP Resolution S/1100 (1948) & Truce Terms (28th April 1949) and the European Parliament's adoption of Baroness Emma Nicholson's historic report on Gilgit Baltistan in the context of Jammu & Kashmir on 24th May 2007.

Environmental experts, political commentators, and civil society activists will thus join in discussing the situation of the 2 million down-trodden people of Balawaristan and the deteriorating environment of this region. Linking the situation to neighbour regions of Central Asia, East Turkestan and Tibet, the conference will aim to raise awareness of Gilgit Baltistan and support local efforts to bring peaceful political change.

More information on the event is available from www.unpo.org/article/12392

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Registration is required and must be submitted by 4 May 2011

Please send your full name, date of birth, place of residence, nationality, organization to ldominguez@unpo.org



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