Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Iyala Saadi, Syrian of Assyrian descent, my ancestors’ roots go deep in its soil where, in April 1st that just passed, my people celebrated the 6767th year of “Akitu”, the Assyrian-Babylonian new year.

I would like firstly to say that Syria is in fact a diverse nation of different ancient ethnicities, cultures, and religions. The Assyrian nation is the indigenous people of Mesopotamia which Syria is a main part of it, and this nation has become a minority in their lands in terms of numbers and political influence.

During this Syrian war, the Assyrians suffered tremendously in many levels where they saw their largest concentration of villages emptied of its people. In 2015, ISIS attacked the peaceful villages of Khabour valley and kidnapped over 235 people, in addition to destruction, theft, and murders. From 33 villages, now they’re reduced to only 4.

Our recommendations to support the existence of minorities’ diversity, especially between the youth, are:

1. **Regarding the constitution** we demand:
   a. A constitutional recognition of the ethnic rights of non-arabs (Assyrians, Kurds, Armenians), and of the religious rights of non-Muslims (Christians, Druze, Yazidi) to create assurances for these groups of full equality.
   b. A constitutional recognition of the Assyrian people as an indigenous people of Syria.

2. **Regarding the youth migration** we demand incenting and encouraging the migrated youth to return to the homeland to strengthen labor force to rebuild the new Syria which preserves its ethnic and religious diversity through:
   a. Abolish the illegitimate and unconstitutional mandatory services;
      In addition to the governmental mandatory service, another mandatory service has been imposed in 2014 by the de facto administration of the so-called “Democratic Self Administration” which is led by PYD in Al Hassaka province. This illegal mandatory service forces the young males 18-30 to be enlisted in the army for at least 9 months, regardless whether this person had served in the Syrian army or not. This Law was the main reason to force over %50 of the youth in Al Hassak Province to migrate.
In addition to the ethical issues raised in the local authorities’ forced military conscription, it goes without saying that it stands in direct violation of the most fundamental international humanitarian legal norms, more specifically the protections furnished in the Fourth Geneva Convention. Most lawmakers find that to be forced to serve more than once for the same country is illegal in both national and international law and norms.

b. Secondly, relief for those who conscientiously objected to government-mandated service from any legal punishments in order to encourage them to return to Syria, finish their studies, and start rebuilding.

3. **Regarding Media:** We recommend:
   a. Supporting free media outlets through creating youth channels and programs that let the minorities from all groups to speak their mind, celebrate their cultures, and discuss their issues.
   b. Designating an official government media outlets (Press, TV, Radio) to be conducted with various minority languages.

4. **Regarding Administration:** we recommend achieving Kota (?) to be designated for the youth in all local administration facilities and committees as well as in national departments.

5. **Regarding peace making:** we recommend facilitating the role of youth in peacemaking efforts through:
   a. Reintegrating the youth in society through the DRR program which aims to cease all violent conflicts and disarmament through creating job opportunities, and reopen all schools.
   b. Adaptation of the constitution to the UN measure 2250 by creating national plan under the supervision of the UN to activate the role of youth in peacemaking and security efforts.

6. **Regarding Education:** One of the most sensitive and vital aspect is education especially when we’re talking about diverse society like Syria. The absence of any scientific research and planning, such as the assimilation policies, can create a fractured generation that lacks knowledge and tolerance to anybody who is different. This is exactly what has been happening in Syria. Therefore we recommend to:
   a. Eliminate all the politicized and ideological educational curriculums of the government and de facto administrations, and create a
new curriculum that promotes effective principles of citizenship and coexistence.

b. Allow the minorities to learn their mother tongue inside of the schools by creating weekly courses without exclusion of any students. In the future, the student will be able to study the curriculum in the language that he/she chooses.

c. Adding mandatory courses in Human Rights to promote equality and tolerance.

We, the Assyrian youth of Syria are hopeful to adapt the UN measure 2250, under the UN supervision, to activate the role of youth in achieving complete social justice in our country and promote the peacemaking efforts.

Thanks to the UNPO for giving a chance for all the underrepresented minorities to make their voices heard.

Tawdi

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Geneva