

Khuzestan ratifies the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations

WHEREAS we, the representatives of Khuzestan, do declare:

- A. Representatives of the tribes and tribal governments of Khuzestan have come together to develop a proposal to ratify the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations with a view to restore tribal sovereignty, recognise tribal governments and expand tribal self-governance.
- B. For much of human history, the Khuzestan region was a beacon of innovation, giving birth to fundamental developments in society including humanity's first cities. Commonly referred to as “the birthplace of the nation,” Khuzestan was where Aryan tribes joined local Elamites in laying the foundations for what became the Persian Empire. Khuzestan came under Arab control after early Muslims swept through the Gulf in the 7th century. It became a semi-autonomous Arab emirate known as Arabistan until it was incorporated into a centralized Iranian state in 1925.
- C. Khuzestan today is inhabited by a number of ethnic groups including the Bakhtiari, Arabs, Qashqai, Afshar, Persians and Armenians. Half of Khuzestan is inhabited primarily by Arabs and the other half is inhabited primarily by Lurs. Both the urban and rural areas of Khuzestan include Arabs, Persians and Lurs who often intermarry, reinforcing Khuzestan’s regional identity and social cohesion.
- D. Khuzestan is on the eastern edge of the Fertile Crescent, a historically verdant region stretching across the Middle East. The province is rich in fresh water resources, but a combination of poor policy decisions and climate change have severely degraded the environment. Since much of Khuzestan’s river water is redirected to other provinces or used in agriculture and industry, little is left for Khuzestan’s residents.
- E. Present-day Khuzestan is far from its former magnificence. Instead, it is filled with disappearing bodies of water, a warming climate, war damage and deteriorating terrain. Parts of Khuzestan—for decades a fertile breadbasket for wheat, corn, rice and sugar—have turned into a dust bowl because of climate change and government mismanagement. The dire environmental conditions have also triggered a “dust bowl” migration. Some 240,000 people migrated from Khuzestan between 2011 and 2016 alone.
- F. In the 1980s, Khuzestan suffered some of the worst fighting of the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq. Government efforts to rebuild Khuzestan after the war did not prioritize local concerns. Today, the province’s infrastructure is aging and inadequate, and the quality of health, education and other social services is poor, especially in rural areas.
- G. Iran’s central government systematically discriminates against Khuzestan’s Indigenous communities, particularly in employment, housing, access to political office, distribution of Khuzestan's oil wealth, and the exercise of cultural, civil and political rights. Khuzestan remains underdeveloped despite being rich in resources of water, gas, oil, petrochemicals and various industries.
- H. The Khuzestan national government includes Armenian, Afshar and Dezfuli indigenous tribes under an autonomous government, as federally recognized tribes within Iran.
- I. In February 2021 representatives from the Ahwaz autonomous government introduced the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations for consideration as part the self-governance discussion among Khuzestan’s Armenian, Afshar and Dezfuli legislation to adopt tribal self-governance for Khuzestan.
- J. The extension of self-governance to Khuzestan would allow its tribes to exercise all of their rights under the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations, including land ownership and the establishment of tribal courts, and would streamline tribal efforts to obtain justice through establishing an international justice tribunal.

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- K. The International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations authorizes tribal governments to assume responsibility for certain government functions, assert tribal priorities, and oversee the management of water, petroleum and other natural resources.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that

1. Khuzestan supports the expansion of tribal self-governance within all of Khuzestan's indigenous tribes and will work with members of their leadership to incorporate the provision of the extension of customary laws within a self-governing confederation.
2. Khuzestan hereby formally ratifies the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations and pledges to implement its policy provisions and guidelines both domestically and in its relations with other signatory nations.
3. This resolution shall be the policy of Khuzestan until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing ratification of the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations was adopted by the leadership of Khuzestan on October 7th 2021.

[signed]

Isa Torfi

