

Baluchistan and Baluch Nationalism: the U.S. Interests

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A Presentation

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It is a great honor for me to appear before you to present the case of the Baluch, one of the most persecuted, oppressed, and neglected peoples in the Middle East and South Asia. On behalf of the Baluch people, with an estimated population of over 15 million living in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, I would like to thank the honorable Members of this Committee and the United States Congress for this opportunity.

Baluchistan: A Historical Perspective

Until the advent of British Colonialism and division of Baluchistan in Mid-19th century, Baluchistan maintained its independence, for the most part, from the surrounding empires. This is reflected in the fact that the pre-division era is known by the Baluch as Baluchi Doura which is a term synonymous with Baluchi era, signifying a period (approximately 1440-1948 A.D.) when the Baluch political and military institutions as well as Baluchi culture and language were paramount throughout Baluchistan. The Baluchi Doura is best identified by the Baluch Tribal Confederacy (approximately 1487-1511 A.D.) established by Mir Chakar Rind, stretching from Kirman in Iran in the west and Indus River in the East which constitute the boundaries of present day Baluchistan. The most powerful independent Baluch state during Baluchi Doura was Khanate of Kalat established in 1666 A.D. and lasted nearly 300 years until the forceful annexation of Eastern Baluchistan into Pakistan in 1948.

Under the British Empire, the land was divided into three parts. The Goldsmid Line drawn in 1871 and demarcated in 1896 gave Western Baluchistan to Persia, while retaining the larger eastern part for British India. The Durand Line, drawn also by the British in 1894, further divided Baluchistan between the British India and Afghanistan, assigning to the latter a portion of Northern Baluchistan. The eastern Baluchistan was forcefully annexed to Pakistan in 1948. The Western Baluchistan was invaded and incorporated into Iran by Reza Shah, the founder of Pahlavi Dynasty, in 1928. The smaller northern part remains part of Afghanistan.

Currently divided among Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, Baluchistan-meaning the Baluch homeland- covers about 240,000 square miles with a coastline stretching nearly 1000 miles from the Strait of Hormuz to Karachi in Pakistan. In addition to a common ancestral homeland Baluchistan, Baluch speak their own language called Baluchi, an ancient Indo-European language, have their distinct culture, share a common history, and adhere to a moderate form of Sunni Islam.

Baluch and Pakistan

Ever since the division and forceful incorporation of their homeland into Pakistan and Iran, the Baluch have struggled to regain their lost freedom, to reassert the Baluch control over their homeland Baluchistan, and to preserve their language and culture within Iran and Pakistan. The Baluch never accepted or recognized either the Goldsmid Line dividing the Baluch between Iran and

Pakistan or the Durand Line separating northern Baluchistan. This is reflected in four insurrections by the Baluch against Pakistan in 1948, 1958, 1973, and 2005 insurgency which is continuing and growing in strength each day. Like the Baluch, Afghanistan and nationalist Pashtoons in Pakistan also do not recognize the Durand Line.

Pakistan and Human Rights Violations against the Baluch

The Baluch insurgent groups declared a unilateral ceasefire upon the election of the new PPP-led government in Pakistan in 2008 in order to show their good will and pave the way for a political solution. But the Pakistani Army did not reciprocate, hence the continuing conflict.

The conflict has taken a heavy toll among Baluch civilians including several thousands held incommunicado by Pakistan military and intelligence services, forced disappearances of thousands of Baluch intellectuals and political activists, internal displacements of an estimated 150,000 Baluch civilians due to the on-going military operations in Baluchistan, and the extrajudicial killings of several hundred Baluch activists under what is known as the "kill and dump policy" pursued by the Pakistani intelligence service known as ISI and its affiliates. According to a report published by the Asian Human Rights Commission on January 31, 2012 and titled "Pakistan: the people of Balochistan have to bury the mutilated bodies of their loved ones almost every day of the week", the extrajudicial killings of disappeared persons in Baluchistan include 23 bullet riddled bodies found during the first month of this year, 56 mutilated bodies during the last six months, and 271 bodies since July 2010 (<http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-021-2012>).

The precise number of enforced disappearances is not known and may never be disclosed by Pakistan. The current civilian government elected in 2008 has acknowledged a list of 1,102 enforced disappearance from Baluchistan. The Pakistan Human Rights Commission of Pakistan cited evidence of 600 disappearances in Baluchistan, but not an estimate of total numbers (Selig S. Harrison, Pakistan: The state of the Union, A Special Report, Center for International Policy, 2009, P.8). But an authoritative report released by Amnesty International in July 2008 clearly shows that the Pakistani government has engaged in large-scale "enforced disappearances" against "activists pushing for greater regional ethnic and regional rights... and greater access to provincial resources" in Baluchistan and Sind. The report adds that the Baluch and Sindi activist were "arbitrarily detained, denied access to lawyers, families and courts and held in undeclared places of detention run by Pakistan's intelligence agencies, with government concealing their fate or whereabouts" (Denying the Undeniable: Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan, Amnesty International, July, 2008).

The Baluch sources put the number of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances much higher than that reported in media. A report published in or around 2010 by the Voice for Baluch Missing Persons, formed by the aggrieved families of the missing Baluch, blamed Pakistan's ISI and MI (Military

Intelligence) for extrajudicial killing and disappearance of “more than 4000 baloch political activists since 2001”. The report adds that since the election of the civilian government in 2008, “ not much has improved for the disappeared or their families in Pakistan” (Voice for Baluch Missing Persons, Disappearances: Pakistan’s Kill and Dump Policy, Understanding Pakistan’s Dirty War Against Baloch People, Quetta, Pakistan, Undated, P. 24).

The unresolved issue of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of Baluch activists and intellectuals by Pakistan’s intelligence agencies is one of the main stumbling blocks in resolving the Pakistan-Baluch conflict. The Baluch leadership has refused to negotiate with Pakistani authorities unless this issue is resolved to the satisfaction of Baluch families affected. Given its involvement in this matter, the Pakistan’s military has prevented the civilian government from addressing this issue.

Economic Exploitation

Another major cause of Baluch-Pakistan conflict is the exploitation of Baluchistan’s rich natural resources by Punjabi-dominated central governments. As reported by Selig S. Harrison, a leading authority on ethnic conflicts in Pakistan, a prime example of Punjabi economic exploitation is that “ Although gas obtained from Baluchistan accounts for 30 percent of Pakistan’s total gas production, Baluchistan consumes only 17 percent of its own output, while the remaining 83 percent goes to the rest of the country” and that “the central government pays a much lower price for Baluchistan gas than for gas produced in other provinces and pays lower royalties” (Selig S. Harrison, Pakistan: The state of the Union, A Special Report, Center for International Policy, 2009, P.21). As a result of such economic policies, Baluchistan is one of the least developed parts of Pakistan. This is in spite of the fact that Baluchistan is the largest Pakistani Province constituting about 44 percent of the Pakistani land mass, is rich in natural resources, is on major trade routes between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, and has several hundred miles of coast line stretching from Iranian port of Gwatr to Karachi.

As the poorest, least developed, and most neglected province in Pakistan, Baluchistan has the worst indicators among Pakistani provinces for life expectancy, school enrollment, adult literacy, infant mortality, and access to drinking water and sanitation. Most major economic activities are concentrated in Punjab where the dominant Punjabis live. Although Baluchistan is known to be rich in minerals including gas, oil, gold, copper, coal, silver, platinum, aluminum, and, most important, uranium, the province is characterized as the “forgotten land”, implying a prolonged economic and social neglect. In spite of the province’s vast resources, there are no major industries in Baluchistan, the Baluch have no control over their resources, and have no say in running Baluchistan’s economy. Literally speaking, the land is being looted by Baluchistan’s new colonial masters in Pakistan.

The Baluch’s lack of control over their resources is the main cause of underdevelopment of Baluchistan. Under the successive Punjabi-dominated

governments, both military and civilian, most of the development expenditures in the province were and are geared towards the expansion of the military-related infrastructure such as roads, military bases, and facilities serving the Pakistani army and settlers, thus hardly benefiting the Baluch masses. In addition, as far as few non-military projects are concerned, they are planned behind closed doors in Islamabad and implemented through the army-controlled provincial bureaucracy. The needs and wants of the Baluch population are not taken into consideration because the Baluch are not represented in economic and political decisions at the provincial level, let alone at the national level.

The Baluch Insurgency and the Pakistan Army

The Baluch welcomed with open arm the newly elected civilian government in 2008, hoping that it will address their demands and grievances. These demands include full control of their natural resources, implementation of 1973 Constitution restoring powers belonging to provinces, recognition of ethnic identities and promotion of Baluchi language in schools and broadcasts, removal of military cantonments from Baluchistan, release of all political prisoners, and the resolution of the enforced disappearances. But given the Pakistan Military's control of security and foreign policy, the weak civilian government has failed to meet the Baluch demand for full autonomy. It adopted what is known as Aghaz Hoghogh Baluchistan(Beginning of the Rights of the Baluch), but has taken no concrete action to implement it.

Given the lack of results on political front, a Baluch insurgency that erupted against General Musharraf's military rule in 2005 has been gaining momentum ever since. Its prime targets have been military bases and government installations throughout Baluchistan. The Pakistan Army and paramilitary Frontier Corps have responded by a series of continuing military operations in Baluchistan to suppress the unrest. These operations have resulted in large casualties on both sides as well as among civilians. This has further hardened the position of the insurgents and the army generals. The insurgents are openly advocating an independent Baluchistan as their ultimate goal. The army, in turn, has been accusing India and Afghanistan of supporting and instigating the Baluch insurgents, without producing any evidence as yet.

As the past Baluch insurgencies have demonstrated, the Baluch-Pakistan conflict can not be resolved through military means alone. In spite of Pakistan Army's overwhelming military force, the Baluch insurgents have gained in strength and have held their ground. They may not be able to defeat the well-armed and well-disciplined Pakistani army, but they can bleed the army and drain Pakistan's scarce resources in a prolonged guerrilla war. Such a pro-longed conflict could also pave the way for foreign intervention that may lead to disintegration of Pakistan as happened with the separation of Bangladesh in the aftermath of Indo-Pakistani war in 1971. The brutality with which the Pakistani army has conducted its operations in Baluchistan has alienated the Baluch population, thus creating a fertile ground for insurgents to operate.

The Prospects for a Political Solution

Until and unless the Baluch demands are met, the prospect for a political solution is not promising. The Baluch political leadership has lost confidence in the weak civilian government due to its inability to deliver on its repeated promises to meet the Baluch demands. Its numerous attempts at reconciliation with the Baluch have been blocked by the Pakistani Army, which has the final say over Baluchistan. As a result, the main Baluch politicians including Mir Suliman Davood Khan, Khan of Kalat, Navab Khair Bakhsh Marri, the Chief of Marri tribe, Sardar Attaullah Mingal, the Chief of Mingal tribe, the elders of Bugti tribe, and the leaders of most Baluch political parties have concluded that further negotiation with the weak civilian government will not serve any purpose.

Therefore, for any dialogue and political negotiation between the Baluch and central government to succeed, it is essential to curb the powers of the Pakistani military and bring it under full civilian control. After all, reconciliation between parties can take place only through negotiations between the duly elected central government and the elected provincial government in Baluchistan. There is no room or popular mandate for the army in such negotiations.

The Baluch are committed to the promotion of democracy, federalism, rule of law, human rights, equal rights for women, protection of the rights of minorities, pluralism, and social justice for all Pakistani citizens. The future of Pakistan as a modern and progressive state could be guaranteed only through participation of all national groups including the Baluch, Pashtoons, Punjabis, Sindis, and other ethnic and religious minorities, with equal voice, in a federal state. The Baluch envision a federal state whereby the central or federal government will be responsible only for national defense, foreign affairs, currency, and national planning. All other powers will be preserved for the federating units or states.

The Geostrategic Importance of Baluchistan and the U.S. Interests

Baluchistan is of great geopolitical importance due to four major factors. First, with a coastline stretching nearly 1000 miles from the Strait of Hormuz to Karachi, Baluchistan occupy a strategic position with a commanding view of shipping lines carrying 40 percent of world oil supplies through the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. has a direct interest in securing the shipping lines in the Persian Gulf. Secondly, Baluchistan links the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Third, Baluchistan holds large reserves of natural resources including silver, uranium, aluminum, oil, gas, gold, copper, and platinum. Fourth, as the closest access point to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean for land locked Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, Baluchistan is the most economic route

for oil pipelines from those countries to the Arabian Sea and from the Gulf countries to Pakistan and India.

Therefore, developments in Baluchistan could directly affect the U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The on-going conflict in Baluchistan, provoked by Pakistani military operations, could have wide-ranging implications that may affect the U.S. interests in regional stability. The growing insurgency in Baluchistan, if not resolved peacefully, could spill over into Afghanistan, Iran, and the neighboring Arab Gulf states with large Baluch population. If the insurgents are successful through their own efforts or through direct foreign military intervention, their stated goal is an independent Baluchistan. This, in turn, could have major political, military, economic, and diplomatic ramifications for the regional powers as well as for the U.S. policies toward the region.

In addition, Baluchistan and Pashtoon areas of Pakistan are used by the Pakistani military and intelligence services to shelter and support Afghan Taliban and other jihadist groups in their continuing attacks against American, NATO, and Afghan forces in Afghanistan. Pakistan uses the Taliban to reassert its control and influence over Afghanistan as its sphere of influence against India. To counter the Pakistan-Taliban alliance, it may become necessary at some point for the U.S. and Afghan government to support Baluch and Pashtoon nationalists who espouse secular values. Both Baluch and Afghans have rejected the Durand Line and have cooperated in the past in their campaign for greater Baluchistan and an independent Pashtoonistan. An alliance of Baluch and Pashtoon nationalist supported by the U.S. can serve as a counter weight to Iranian and Pakistani support for Taliban as U.S. prepares for withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Moreover, the Baluch's interests coincides with those of the U.S. and the Baluch leaders have openly welcomed the U.S. support. As stated by Selig S. Harrison, an eminent scholar of Pakistani Politics, "an independent Baluchistan would not be a threat to U.S. interests, since Baluch leaders have often declared their support for U.S. strategic objectives in the Persian Gulf and have offered assurances that the U.S. Navy and U.S. merchant shipping would have access to modernized port facilities at Gwadar..." in Baluchistan(Selig S. Harrison, Pakistan: The State of the Union, A Special Report, Center for International Policy, 2009, P.25).

Among Common areas of interest is the Baluch support for the U.S. efforts to contain the spread of Talibanization in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given their secular outlook and ideology, the Baluch nationalists and political parties have acted as a major barrier to Talibanization of Baluchistan, thus incurring the wrath of Pakistani military and intelligence services. In addition, Baluch are also opposed to the growing Chinese involvement in Baluchistan's Gwadar port. Any Chinese naval base in Gwadar on the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz poses a strategic challenge to the U.S. interest in the region. That is also the case with the plans for linking China to Gwadar via an overland route. Moreover, Baluch oppose the gas pipeline project for carrying Iranian gas to Pakistan and are ready to stop it. This is in accord with the U.S. economic sanctions imposed on

Iran. To counter the growing Iran-Pakistan alliance to suppress the Baluch, they are also against the growing Iranian hegemony in the region.

Baluch and Iran

Iran is a heterogeneous state comprised of six distinct nationalities including Arabs, Baluch, Kurds, Persians, Turks, and Turkmens. Although there are no accurate data as to the population of Iran's various national groups, the recent scholarly literature tends to agree that non-Persians are a majority comprising at least 55 percent of Iran's estimated population of 70 millions. The five non-Persian nationalities have one other important feature in common: They live along the state's international borders, which cut across their ethnic homelands, thus dividing them between two or three states.

In spite of its large and diverse population, its rich natural resources, and its strategic location, Iran has failed to develop its full potentials and to occupy its rightful place in the international community. It lags far behind economically as compared to the emerging economic powers in Asia-Pacific. In contrast to the growing spread of democracies in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, Iran is in the grip of a clerical regime ruling by an iron fist as demonstrated by the recent violent crackdown of peaceful demonstration in Tehran and the mass executions mentioned in Baluchistan. The backwardness of the Iranian political systems, whether monarchial or clerical, is clearly evident from the relegation of Iranian women, more than half of Iran's population, to second class citizens as compared with other regional countries such as Bangladesh, India, Israel, and even Pakistan, where women have been repeatedly elected as prime ministers.

Baluch and Iran: A historical Perspective

The Iranian Baluchistan was invaded and incorporated into Iran by Reza Shah, the founder of Pahlavi Dynasty, in 1928. As the dominant power in the region at the time, the British supported Reza Shah's annexation of Baluchistan in order to strengthen Iran as buffer state against Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Today, Iranian Baluchistan is divided into three parts to expedite its integration and assimilation into Iran. The largest part constitutes the "Province of Seistan and Baluchistan". It covers more than 181,578 square kilometers, which is in itself the largest province in Iran. The second part of Iranian Baluchistan is officially known as the Province of Hormuzgan for its location on the Strait of Hormuz. The third and northern part of Iranian Baluchistan is included in the neighboring Persian-speaking Provinces of Kerman and Khorasan. All three parts combined cover around 280,000 square kilometers.

In addition to their ancestral homeland Baluchistan, Baluch speak their own language called Baluchi, an ancient Indo-European language, have their distinct culture, share a common history, and adhere to Sunni Islam while Persians follow Shi'ate Islam, the official state religion of the ruling clerics. As a result, Baluch have been subject of constant ethnic, religious, cultural, and

economic discrimination and political and military repression ever since their forceful incorporation into Iran in 1928. In turn, the Baluch have been striving to preserve their language and culture and to secure a degree of self-rule within a secular, democratic, and federal Iran.

The Human Rights Violations and Discrimination against the Baluch and Sunnis

Both Iranian constitutions of 1906 and 1979 failed to recognize the non-Persian national groups or to protect their political and cultural self-rule in their own respective homelands. Consequently, the Baluch and other non-Persian groups have been marginalized and subjected under both monarchial and clerical regimes to blatant discrimination in all spheres of their daily lives. The discrimination is institutionalized and systematic and is geared to the ongoing state policies of Persianization of non-Persian nationalities and conversion of Sunnis, Baha'is, and other religious minorities to shi'ism.

Political Discrimination and Oppression

The core policy of the Persian –dominated governments, both clerical and monarchial, has been to forcefully assimilate or Persianize Baluch and other non-Persian nationalities. In this context, the current clerical regime like its predecessor, refers to all six nationalities comprising Iran- namely, Arabs, Baluch, Kurds, Persians, Turks, and Turkmen's- as constituting a single nation called Millat-e Iran or the "the nation of Iran". As embodied, interpreted, and implemented in the first Iranian Constitution of 1906 as well as in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of 1979, the concept of "Millat-e Iran" is a manifestation of Persian nationalism which is equated with Iranian nationalism.

Aside from its theocratic color and content, "the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran" hardly differs from the Constitution of 1906 in respect to preserving the unitary state system in the country. Like its predecessor, the new constitution ruled out the question of autonomy or any other form of recognition of national, cultural, and religious rights of non-Persian nationalities. It declared in Article 12 that "the official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelve Ja'fari School of Thought and this principle shall remain eternally immutable". Similarly, Article 15 recognized Persian as the official state language, while prohibiting the use of non-Persian languages in schools, offices, or for any other official use in their respective homelands.

Moreover, the rights of Baluch and Iranian Sunnis in general were further restricted by the provision of Article 115, which excluded Sunnis from holding the office of the Presidency of the Republic, thus reducing Baluch and Sunnis to the status of second-class citizens. In addition, the provision of Vilayat-e Faghih (governance of religious jurist) in Article 5 had no base in the tenets of the Sunni branch of Islam and as such it was not acceptable to Sunnis. According to Article 5, the Valii-e Faghih or governing jurist, who is not elected, is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and has ultimate authority over all the

three branches of the government. As the non-elected supreme leader, he is empowered to dismiss the elected president, to dissolve the parliament, and to remove at will the supposedly independent judicial authorities. Obviously, the concentration of such broad and unchecked powers in the hands of one unelected individual has been strongly opposed by Baluch and other national groups as well as by secular opposition.

In addition, the Baluch have been totally excluded from all the decision-making positions at local, provincial, and central government levels. Almost all provincial governors, city mayors, and the heads of all provincial departments are non-Baluch appointed by the central government. The Baluch and Sunnis were never represented in decision making positions in central government. No Baluch or Sunni ever served as a minister of cabinet or as an ambassador. Even the number of the Baluch in the provincial administration is hardly more than five percent of the total civil servants.

Similarly, the Baluch-speaking areas have been arbitrarily divided administratively into three parts to expedite the Baluch assimilation in accordance with the clerical government's Persianisation and Shiazation policies as mentioned earlier. This policy towards the Baluch is in no way distinct or different from that pursued toward other non-Persian national groups including Arabs, Kurds, Turks, and Turkmen's. The differences, if any, are merely in degree not in kind. Although all these national groups possess historically defined geographic homelands, none has been constituted or recognized as a separate administrative unit let alone as a self-autonomous province. Each ethnic region or homeland has been arbitrarily divided into several parts and incorporated in different provinces at different times. Like Baluchistan, Kurdistan and Azerbaijan have been arbitrarily divided into several parts to facilitate their Persianization and to prevent any threat that may arise if Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, or Baluchistan were reconstituted to incorporate all parts of their respective historical homelands.

Mass Executions of Baluch Prisoners

Although the Baluch, with an estimated population of five to seven million, constitute less than 10% of Iranian population, the number of Baluch executed in 2009 exceeded more than half of total executions in Iran. As an example of cold-blooded mass murder by the clerical dictatorship, thirteen young Baluch were hanged in Zahedan prison on July 14, 2009 followed by three more executions the next day. They were accused of membership in Popular Resistance Movement of Iran, also known as Jundullah, that is fighting for the rights of Baluch and Sunnis against the Shia't clerical regime in Iran. They were charged with medieval crimes of waging war against God, corruption on earth, and the fabricated charge of collusion with the so-called enemies of the Islamic Republic, namely the US and Israel referred to as "Zionist Entity". The US and Israel have vehemently denied these charges and Jundullah has rejected them also as baseless fabrications similar to the Islamic Republic's attempt to attribute the on-

going mass protests against the election fraud in Tehran and other major cities to foreign powers.

The Islamic Republic ignored the repeated calls by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations to halt this mass execution and to accord the accused fair trial and due process of law as require under international law. Subsequently, the EU also condemned this mass execution in Zahedan last. According to local Baluch sources, the 13 young Baluch executed, including four students of Baluchistan University, had participated in peaceful anti-government demonstrations during and after the presidential election in Zahedan. One of the main reasons for their execution was to suppress a growing uprising and insurgency among ethnic Baluch, who adhere to Sunni Islam, against the Iranian Government run by a Shia't clerical dictatorship. The mass killing of the Baluch was also intended to send a strong message to other non-Persian ethnic groups- including Iran's Kurds, Arabs, Azeri Turks, and Turkmens- to prevent similar uprisings among them.

It is time to warn the world that Iranian Baluchistan is well on its way to become the Islamic Republic's Darfur unless the international community acts to stop it before it is too late. The actions of the Islamic Republic against the Baluch certainly constitute crimes against humanity meriting investigation by the UN and international tribunals.

Cultural Discrimination:

The use of Baluchi language, Baluchi schools, and Baluchi publications have been strictly prohibited even in their own homeland Baluchistan. That is also the case with other non-Persian languages. Only Persian history is taught as "Iranian" history, never the history of Baluch or other national groups. No cultural institutions or activities are tolerated among the Baluch or other non-Persians. Even the Iranian census data do not reflect the nature of its ethnic heterogeneity. Instead, it uses religious designation to emphasize Muslim homogeneity and to distort the multi-ethnic nature of the country.

Among many instances of cultural oppression against the Baluch was the arrest of six members of the Voice of Justice of the Young People's Society, a Baluch cultural association registered under Iranian law, in early May 2007. This NGO was primarily involved in organizing concerts, arts exhibitions, and educational courses for young Baluch. Subsequently, the head of the organization, Mr. Ya'qub Mehrnehad, a student, Journalist and civil activist, was tried in secret and convicted to death for an unknown offence in early February 2008. He has allegedly been tortured. He is currently on death row without access to his family members or a lawyer. His brother, Ibrahim Mehrnehad, is also in jail and has been also denied access to his family or to a lawyer.

Economic Discrimination

Economically, centralization of power has led to a pattern of an uneven economic development whereby all trade, industry, and development are concentrated in central Iran to the total exclusion of other regions such as Baluchistan and Kurdistan. As a result, Baluchistan is the one of the least developed parts of Iran. This is in spite of the fact that Baluchistan is the largest Iranian Province constituting 15 to 18 per cent of the Iranian land mass, is rich in natural resources, is on major trade routes between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, and has a 700-mile coast line stretching from Strait of Hurmoz to Pakistani border.

Iranian Baluchistan is one of the poorest, least developed, and neglected provinces in Iran. According to the UN Common Country Assessment for Iran (www.undp.org.ir/reports/npd/CCA.pdf), Baluchistan has the worst indicators among Iranian provinces for life expectancy, school enrollment, adult literacy, infant mortality, and access to drinking water and sanitation. All major economic activities are concentrated in central Iran where the dominant Persians live. Although Baluchistan is known to be rich in minerals including gas, oil, gold, and marine resources, the province is characterized as the "forgotten land", implying a prolonged economic and social neglect. In spite of the province's vast resources, there are no major industries in Baluchistan, the Baluch have no control over their resources, and have no say in running Baluchistan's economy. Literally speaking, the land is being looted by Baluchistan's new colonial masters in Iran and Pakistan.

The Baluch's lack of control over their resources is the main cause of underdevelopment of Baluchistan. As a result, there is a growing economic and social gap between Baluch and Persian-dominated regions of Iran, a fact that makes Iran a prime example of uneven development in the world. Under both monarchical and clerical governments, most of the development expenditures in the province were and are geared towards the expansion of the military-related infrastructure such as roads, military bases, and facilities serving Persian bureaucrats and settlers, thus hardly benefiting the Baluch masses. In addition, as far as non-military projects are concerned, they are planned behind closed doors in Tehran, due to the highly centralized nature of economic planning in Iran, and implemented through the Persian-controlled provincial bureaucracy. The needs and wants of the Baluch population are not taken into consideration because the Baluch are not represented in economic and political decisions at the provincial level, let alone at the national level.

Religious Discrimination

Overwhelming majority of the Baluch adhere to Sunni school of Islam as are Kurds, Turkmens, people of Talesh region in the Gilan Province along the Caspian Sea, Persian-speaking regions of Khorasan Province bordering Afghanistan, and the population of southern coasts and islands in the Persian Gulf. Together, the Iranian Sunnis constitute more than a quarter of Iran's estimated population of 60 millions. In spite of its claim to the leadership of the Islamic world, the Islamic Republic of Iran has subjected its Sunni population to

religious discrimination and, in some instances, to forceful conversion to Shi'ism. As a matter of fact, the Sunnis have not been allowed to build a mosque in Tehran where several million Sunnis live. This is in spite of the clerical regime's claim for leadership of the Islamic world. If fellow Muslims are treated so harshly by the Islamic Republic, the fate of Baha'is and other non-Muslim religious minorities should be of great concern to international community.

Numerous Sunni clerics from Baluchistan, Kurdistan, Turkmen Sahra and other Sunni regions have been arbitrarily arrested, tortured, and assassinated. As documented by Amnesty International in its report cited above, "A number of Baluchis, including Sunni clerics, have been killed in suspicious circumstances both in Iran and Abroad. Similar suspicious deaths of members of other religious minorities or of those opposed to the Iranian authorities point to a pattern of extrajudicial executions by the Iranian authorities". The said report names only few of the victims including moulavi (religious title used by Sunni clerics) Abdolmalek Molaazadeh, Moulavi Abdolnasser Jamshid Zahi, Moulavi Ahmad Sayyad, and Moulavi Aman Naroui. The author personally knew Moulavi Habibullah Hosseinbor who was summoned to the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence in 1984 when he disappeared. Since then, no one ever heard from him and it is believed that he died under torture. Hundreds if not thousands members of the opposition groups and minorities have suffered a similar fate.

A practice widely used to discriminate against Baluch and other minorities is Gozinesh meaning selection, an ideological test requiring applicants to universities and candidates for government jobs to demonstrate allegiance to Shia Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran including the concept of Vilayat-e Faghih (Governance of Religious Jurist), a concept not adhered to by Sunnis. This practice has been used to exclude Baluch from admission to universities or employment by government ever since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. As observed by Amnesty International in its report titled "Iran: Human Right Abuses Against the Baluchi Minority", dated September 17, 2007, "In law and practice, this process (i.e. Gozinesh) impairs- on grounds of political opinion, previous political affiliation or support or religious affiliation-equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation for all those who seek employment in the public and parastatal sector (such as the bonyads) and, reportedly, in some instances in parts of private sector."

The Solution: Federal Democracy

The only viable solution to the chronic political crisis in Iran is democracy, devolution, and federalism. Such a democratic system of government is best suited for a multinational/multi-ethnic state like Iran that is home to Persians, Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, Turkmen, Turks, and other religious and ethnic minorities. A federal system is designed to protect against dictatorship and absolute power, ensure political participation at local, state, and federal levels, and create a more even system of economic development. As it is said, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. The federal system has functioned reasonably

well and has a successful track record as demonstrated by the examples of the US, Switzerland, India, and many other countries.

The Baluch are committed to the promotion of democracy, federalism, rule of law, human rights, equal rights for women, protection of the rights of minorities, pluralism, and social justice for all Iranian citizens. We believe that the future of Iran as a modern and progressive state could be guaranteed only through participation of all national groups, with equal voice, in a federal Iran. The Baluch envision a federal state whereby the central or federal government will be responsible for national defense, foreign affairs, currency, and national planning. All other powers will be preserved for the federating units or states.

The federal constitution shall treat all Iranian citizens, regardless of gender, race, color, or religion, as equal under the law and shall protect and guarantee freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, freedom of association, freedom of religion, and free and fair election. The federal constitution shall also ensure that all national groups constituting Iran will have equal opportunity to develop their respective cultures, languages, histories, economies and homelands. The federal constitution shall also protect the rights of religious minorities including Baha'is, Christians, Jews, and Sunnis. The constitutions of the federating units or states shall also guarantee the same rights for their respective citizens. Federal and state constitutions shall mandate that federal and state governments be based on elected legislative and executive branches and independent judiciaries.

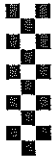
The only vision guaranteeing the future of Iran as a modern, stable, and unified state in the community of nations is to establish a genuine democracy through a secular and federal state where the rule of law is supreme, where individual rights and liberties are protected, where the rights of women and minorities are respected, and where various Iranian ethnic and religious groups enjoy equal rights and self-rule. Otherwise, the Islamic Republic of Iran will collapse from within and will face the same fate suffered by the former Yugoslavia and ex-Soviet Union.

The Iranian nationalities- Baluch, Kurds, Arabs, Azeri Turks, Turkmen, and Lurs- will never willingly accept their status as second class citizens within Iran. Should the Iranian state fail to address their quest for self-rule, its future remains bleak.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1- The U.S. should condemn in the strongest possible terms the grave human rights violations perpetrated against the Baluch in Iran and Pakistan.**
- 2- The U.S. should set up daily broadcasts in Baluchi language through Voice of America.**
- 3- The U.S. should provide economic aid specifically earmarked for education and health projects in Pakistani Baluchistan.**

- 4- The U.S. should support and strengthen Baluch-Pashtoon alliance to counter Pakistani and Iranian moves in Afghanistan.**
- 5- The U.S. should facilitate negotiations between the Baluch and central government in Pakistan for a peaceful resolution of their conflict.**
- 6- The U.S. should support an independent Baluchistan in case Pakistan or Iran or both collapsed from within.**

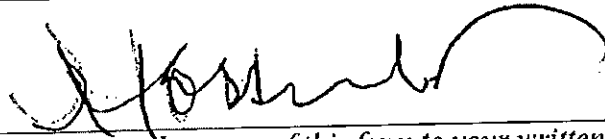


Attn: Scott Cullinane

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs

"TRUTH IN TESTIMONY" DISCLOSURE FORM

Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and the Rules of the Committee require the disclosure of the following information. A copy of this form should be attached to your written testimony and will be made publicly available in electronic format, per House Rules.

1. Name:	2. Organization or organizations you are representing:
Dr. Mohammad Hosseinbor	None
3. Date of Committee hearing:	
02/08/2012	
4. Have you received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?	5. Have any of the organizations you are representing received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
6. If you answered yes to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets.	
7. Signature: 	

Please attach a copy of this form to your written testimony.