

**Side Event**  
**BREAKING THE CYCLE OF REPRESSION AGAINST ACTIVISTS**  
**AND PROTESTERS THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY**  
**June 30 · Geneva, Switzerland**

Remarks from  
**Sabah Bandoui (Baloch Human Rights Organization)**

Currently 989 words (should be a little over 6 minutes at a comfortable pace)

Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen,

As a representative of a human rights organization that monitors and reports on the human rights situation in Iran, I am grateful to the organizers and participants for the opportunity to speak to you today about advancing accountability and ending impunity for serious rights violations committed in the context of exercising the rights to peaceful assembly and association.

As many of you may know, like other marginalized communities in Iran, the Baloch people bear a significant brunt of state repression, especially in the context of peaceful protests. The suppression of the right to peaceful assembly and association is particularly devastating for marginalized communities that have long struggled for equality and justice. These communities face systemic discrimination, exclusion, and violence, and the right to peaceful assembly and association is a vital tool for us to be able to fight for our rights and dignity and to challenge our marginalisation.

On September 30th, 2022, a day now known as “Bloody Friday,” state forces exhibited an unparalleled level of brutality, targeting peaceful Baloch protesters gathering after the Friday prayer in Zahedan, the provincial capital. This exceptional use of state force resulted in an estimated 120 deaths, including 20 children — marking it the deadliest day of repression so far in the movement sparked by the tragic death of Jina Mahsa Amini on 16 September, last year, while in the custody of Tehran’s morality police. These protests were a continuation of a series of demonstrations that began in June 2022 to express community outrage at the rape of a 15-year-old Baluch girl by a local police chief in Chahbahar, Balochistan, and they continued after nationwide protests erupted last September. Baloch protesters then integrated the ‘Women. Life. Freedom’ movement; paying a heavy price for their decision to unite with other Iranian communities in their indignation, condemnation, and calls for accountability.

These egregious human rights violations highlight the need for accountability, yet the government's failure to act is painfully clear. The glaring impunity reveals two interlinked realities:

Firstly, Iranian advocates and rights defenders are unable to pursue accountability due to the lack of functioning accountability systems for human rights violations in the country. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, the Iranian judiciary, instead of providing recourse, acts as an instrument of repression, making the pursuit of justice in Iran completely unrealistic.

Secondly, Iranian authorities are unwilling to pursue accountability. This is because the violence inflicted on protesters is intentional, and it is part of a strategy from authorities to instill fear and quell dissent. The impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators is a deliberate message to Iranians that any attempt to protest and demonstrate will be met with violent repression.

This situation is even more pronounced in minority-dominated regions like Balochistan. The Baluch people, who represent just 4% of Iran's total population, account for over 30% of executions and continue to struggle under deplorable socio-economic conditions. Marginalized communities such as the Baluch face heightened levels of state oppression, emboldening the cycle of impunity.

I'd also like to note that coverage of the June protests in Balochistan that ended in the "Bloody Friday" tragedy was scant. The unfortunate reality for marginalized communities in Iran — and everywhere — is that our stories and the struggles they recount often go unheard. Despite the perseverance and strength that our communities exhibit in the face of systemic and systematic abuses, a lack of resources and access to international media and mainstream NGOs means that too many people never learn about these injustices.

The lack of visibility for marginalized communities also emboldens the cycle of impunity. When human rights abuses go unnoticed and unreported, perpetrators are unlikely to be held accountable for their actions. This reinforces the sense of impunity that allows abuses in Iran to continue unchecked, perpetuating the marginalization and oppression of our communities.

Despite this dire situation, voices from within Iran are louder than ever, and it is our collective responsibility to listen and act. The absence of an

independent and impartial justice in Iran calls for international action, particularly in advancing accountability and ending impunity for serious abuses committed against those exercising their fundamental freedoms. As highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur, Mr. Clement Voule, the international community must take concrete steps to hold perpetrators of such abuses accountable for their actions.

This includes, in the context of Iran:

- Implementing targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for the commission of serious human rights violations against Baluch and all Iranians in the context of protests
- Supporting all endeavors for accountability in Iran, including the investigation of the International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran (“FFMI”), and prosecutions in third countries under universal jurisdiction; and
- Utilizing all available avenues within the UN to raise concerns about the repression of the Baluch and other Iranians and mobilize international pressure for change.

In conclusion, advancing accountability and ending impunity for serious abuses committed in the context of exercising the right to peaceful assembly and association is a matter of urgency, particularly in Balochistan. It is incumbent upon the international community to take concrete steps to ensure that perpetrators of such abuses are held accountable for their actions. Let us give voice to the historically voiceless and work together towards a just and equitable future. Thank you.