



## RESOLUTION ON KURDISH AND OTHER MINORITY GROUPS IN IRAN: LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Proposed by Kurdish PEN Centre seconded by San Miguel de Allende PEN

*The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 85<sup>th</sup> Congress in Manila, Philippines, 30<sup>th</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019;*

**Preamble:** Linguistic and cultural diversity is a sign of richness. Iran must respect its internal language diversity. Kurdish, Azerbaijani, Belouchi, Turkmen, and Arab writers, journalists, and activists continue to face imprisonment, detention and severe persecution measures in Iran for the mere use of Kurdish language. Other minority peoples of Iran continue to face harassment and persecution for practising their language, literature and culture.

In June 2019, and after concerns raised by the Supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ali Khamenei, the Minister of Education Rizwan Hekimzade announced a [programme](#) named “Just for Persian (Farsi) Language”, requiring all primary school children to be proficient in Farsi language and to pass a [certificate of health](#) based on Persian-language proficiency in order to be allowed to enrol in school. This has caused [major concerns](#) to non-Persian-speaking minorities.

Furthermore, on 23 April, 2019, Zara Mohammadi, a volunteer Kurdish language teacher, activist and member of the Nozhin cultural-social association, was [arrested](#) by the security forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran from her home in the city of Sanandaj/Sine. Her family was able to see her on 30<sup>th</sup> April in Sanandaj Correctional Centre. Although she has not yet been taken to court, her lawyers have confirmed that she is detained for teaching Kurdish language to children unofficially. According to her family, prior to her arrest she was frequently interrogated for teaching Kurdish children reading and writing in their mother tongue.

**The General Assembly of Delegates of PEN International is:**

**Concerned** about the continuous policy of harassment depriving Kurdish and other ethnic minorities citizens in Iran from studying in or developing their language, identity and culture;

**Alarmed by** the programme “Just for Persian (Farsi) Language” targeting children of ethnic minorities;

**The General Assembly of Delegates calls upon the Iranian government to:**

- End repressive policies on linguistic and cultural rights, including the education programme “Just for Persian (Farsi) Language”;

- Immediately and unconditionally release Zara Mohammadi and all writers, journalists, and activists currently detained in Iran for peacefully exercising their right to free expression, in accordance with its obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is a member state.
- Establish a Kurdish Language Act to protect linguistic and mother-tongue educational rights.