

Fourth UN Forum on Minority Issues

Concrete Measures

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

Thank you Madam Chair.

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization fully supports the draft recommendations document, particularly paragraph 26 which addresses the specific needs of minority women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In order to address these needs, however, UNPO feels it is necessary to include additional details about the specific experiences of minority women in conflict, particularly in reference to the issue of one-sided or state-sponsored violence.

Minority women may be deliberately and collectively targeted for violence because of their gender and ethnic identity. Sexual violence against minority women is used as a deliberate strategy to attack the "honor" of an entire community. Moreover, minority women are often much more vulnerable to violence, particularly in cases where such violence is perpetrated by the state. Access to justice is a significant challenge contributing to the perpetuation of violence against minority women.

Minority women in situations where a minority group is in conflict with the government and in situations of persistent and deliberate targeting of a minority group by its state government even in the absence of traditional armed conflict, face significant and unique threats. However, the experiences of minority women in such situations are often hidden from public view.

Minority regions experiencing violence involving the state are often completely closed off to independent NGOs, journalists, activists, and even humanitarian agencies – minority women, therefore, do not have the benefit of external actors to provide them with protection, rehabilitation or justice. Minority women working for human rights and peace in such situations may be particularly vulnerable, as they present a challenge to state policies as well as to

In order to make a step towards addressing this significant problem, we recommend the following concrete steps:

- Special procedures mandate holders should make special efforts during country visits to ensure that ethnic minority regions, particularly those where collective violence has occurred, are visited and minority women living within those regions are specifically and directly consulted for their experiences, as these populations are often significantly marginalized and isolated, making it difficult to monitor and report on abuses against them
- Governments should allow full access to ethnic minority regions and minority women in particular during country visits from special procedures mandate holders. Governments should not use the issue of security as an excuse to close off minority regions.
- The international community as a whole should support minority women's activism for human rights and peace at the grassroots level where possible. Where direct support is not possible, special measures should be taken to increase protection through international awareness of these movements and the threats they face.
- Initiate efforts to include mention of the specific challenges facing minority women in situations of state-sponsored violence and conflict in the international frameworks dealing with women and conflict, in line with the way in which resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council addresses these issues for women as a whole.