



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda items 2 and 10

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Technical assistance and capacity-building**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-11592(E)



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## The situation of minorities in Yemen

Article 19 enshrined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which Adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993 said "Considering the importance of the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and the contribution of such promotion and protection to the political and social stability of the States in which such persons live.

The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirms the obligation of States to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law in accordance with the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

The persons belonging to minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion and to use their own language in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination."

Yemen accessed to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1987 and hence it under a duty to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, including of minority groups like the Baha'is, and to protect their minority rights including "in community with the other members of their group ... to practice their own religion." As is clear from the example mentioned in this article, this is not the case in Yemen.

The Baha'i population in Yemen constitutes an exceedingly small minority. It makes up just 1% of the non-Muslim population of Yemen. Despite the international legal framework which seeks to guarantee the rights of minority groups, the Baha'is minority rights remain unprotected. They are the most persecuted religious group in Yemen. It seems likely that it will soon result in the annihilation of the Baha'i community in Yemen, in whole or in part.

The issue of the Baha'is in Yemen has returned to the fore recently, following Recent actions the Houthi militia in Sana'a this week of the forced displacement of the Yemeni Baha'i group from Sanaa flagrant violation of all human rights principles in uprooting Yemeni citizens from their homeland, canceling any right to freedom of belief and that this is not less than the death penalty that they had previously issued.

Reports from Yemen affirmed the forced displacement of the Baha'is comes as a reinforcement of the approach that the Houthis has devoted to its rejection of any societal pluralism and the minorities prevent their rights to practice their own religion since its inception taking control not of Sana'a in September 2014 when the Houthi did not only targeted Bahai community, but campaign has started with the rest of the members of Jewish community which their number was reached 55,000 in 1948, but in 2018 it decreased to less than 50 people due to the immigration of many of them to Israel.

Several reports from Yemen documented that, when the Huthis succeeded in controlling the capital Sana'a, the Houthi uprooted of the Yemeni Jewish from their hometown and homeland and declared clearly the atonement of all other religions and the lack of acceptance of the survival of the Yemeni Jewish who were born and lived on their Yemeni land since the eternity.

The International Organization for the Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) further identifies several non-governmental organizations' reports concerning the increasing number of arrests of members of the Baha'i community. It confirms that approximately 30 such arrests were carried out during the recent years, including the harassment targeting the Baha'i community in inflammatory speech along with a wave of detentions, "court summons," and punishment without a fair or transparent legal process. This rhetoric also resembles that used by Daesh to justify its attacks against the Yazidis prior to the start of its genocidal campaign against the Yazidis in Sinjar. The striking similarities should not be ignored.

In May 2017 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, when he warned that 'the new wave of court summons and arrest orders appears to be an act of intimidation pressuring the Yemeni Baha'is to recant their faith, and reminded the de facto authorities in Sana'a about the international standards of the right to freedom of religion or

belief and the “right of persons not to be arbitrarily detained for exercising religious freedom or for belonging to a religious minority”.

With the increasing spread of Covid-19 in Yemen and appalling conditions in detention facilities throughout the country, the health risks to the Baha’i and other detainees are acute. Media reports indicating that Houthi authorities may be covering up a spike in Covid-19 cases in areas under their control lend even more urgency to their plight. The Houthi authorities should act on their orders and avoid health risks to people who should never have been jailed.

IOLDCs is deeply concerned by the harassment and detention of Baha’is by the Houthis in Sana’a, Yemen. The Houthis have targeted the Baha’i community in inflammatory speech along with a wave of detentions, “court summons,” and punishment without a fair or transparent legal process.

On this regard IOLDCs requests the United Nations Human Rights Council to follow up the implementation of its resolution issued in September 2019 on the Houthi persecution of the Baha’is on the basis of their belief, and to follow up the recommendations issued by several special rapporteurs, including the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

The International Organization For Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) therefore, recommends the Human Rights Council to follow up the issue of Baha’i community, and to put an end for the unacceptable treatment of Baha’is in order to enable the Baha’i community in Yemen and to practice their religion without fear of intimidation or reprisals and to stop the dedication of the method of combating beliefs and suppressing freedoms.

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