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Mr. Chairperson,
Honourable delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

I am honoured today to have been granted this opportunity to present the situation of the Turkmen community in Iraq to this 24th session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

It is not necessary to reiterate the catastrophe that ever-escalating conflict in Iraq is creating, nor the ineffectiveness of efforts made thus far by the international community to prevent deterioration of the situation, and reduce the steadily accruing numbers of casualties.

Foremost amongst the casualties, however, are human rights. Principle human rights violations include direct military attacks on cities such as Falluja¹ and Telafer^{2,3} and other cities in Western Iraq⁴ and isolated, but nevertheless high profile cases of abuse of Iraqi civilians by coalition soldiers (amongst them rape, indiscriminate killing of civilians and torture in Abu Ghraib⁵). The degradation of basic infrastructure in Iraq – healthcare⁶⁻¹⁰, education, municipal facilities – has further called into question the legitimacy of coalition presence in Iraq. Iraq is now the fourth most unstable country in the world.¹¹

However, this is familiar to you. Today, I want to raise a particular issue, that of safeguarding the rights of the Iraqi Turkmen in the context of political restructuring of Iraq.

The reconstitution of a federal system raises many concerns for the different sections of the Iraqi community in different areas – including Turkmen, Assyrians and Shabaks.

The Turkmen represent the third largest Iraqi community, numbering around 3 million. They are dispersed through several provinces in Turkmeneli. Historic cities include Telafer, Kerkuk, Erbil and Tuz Khurmatu, amongst others.

According to the Iraqi Constitution of October 2005, the fate of such provinces as Kerkuk, with respect to the Kurdish controlled region will be decided by a simple majority vote in the province, to be held no later than December 2007. The recent history of aggression by Kurdish militia, or Pashmarga, and political domination of ethnically diverse, and historically Turkmen, regions by Kurds, combined with the now imminent likelihood of Kerkuk becoming part of this Kurdish region is of great concern to the Turkmen.¹²

Ethnicity should not be consecrated as the basis for territorial division. The cultural and human rights of the Iraqi Turkmen in the region must be safeguarded on equal footing to those for Kurds.

The ethnic militantism in this Region, exemplified by the activities of the *Pashmarga*, is of particular concern, threatening the status of other communities within the region.

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In the Turkmen district of Telafer, for example, *Pashmarga* militias entered the city in April 2003, appointed a Kurdish head of district and committing numerous acts of violence in the process; including lootings, insulting, and provocative actions.

This has proved to be only the beginning. Subsequently the climate has enabled other resistance groups to set themselves up in the region. Repeated destructive attacks by coalition troops and the National Guard have only served to hugely increase the casualties and escalate the crisis.

The casualties in Telafer are:

- 1350 dead and 2650 wounded, including a large number of children, women and elders.
- About seven thousand were arrested; one thousand are still in prison.
- 3658 houses, 563 shops and 469 Autos are damaged. About 500 houses are completely demolished.
- 1468 houses robbed,

Today, assassinations, kidnappings, arrests, bombing with mortars are almost daily happenings in Telafer. A police control station is found in every several hundred meters. Several quarters are repeatedly raided by troops and the houses were examined. The male population who are older than 15 years are collected and examined by veiled peoples, those who are pointed by him were arrested and sent to unknown prisons. The infrastructure of the city severely demolished. The municipality services are harshly deteriorated. Several marketplaces are frequently closed.

Today, the people rarely dare to travel to Telafer. Living in the city is a great suffering and severely insecure. The number of the emigrated peoples is 4685 families. The inhabitants are indirectly forced to evacuate their city.

The *Pashmarga militants* must be persuaded to disarm them during this crucial transitional period, as part of the reconstruction of the new Iraqi state. The Kurdish-Shiite dominated Iraqi national Guards should be restructured with fair participation of all the communities of Iraq. In light of similar Kurdish domination of the administrations of Kerkuk and Tuz Khurmatu, the situation of minorities in the context of such ethnic conflict and ethnic regionalism is critical.

The political control of Iraq on the basis of ethnic groups is highly risky. The multi-national and multi-religious composition of the Iraqi population is highly mixed that boundaries cannot be differentiated. Erbil city, for example, which now made the capital of the Kurdish region, was almost purely Turkmen city at the turn of latter century. Today it is a highly mixed balance of Turkmen and Kurds.

On the basis of the above situation, and risk of further marginalisation of the different Iraqi communities through the current violence and policy of ethnic federalism, I therefore address this assembly and ask the UN:

To safeguard the status of Iraqi Turkmen, to ensure that Turkmen communities are not marginalized through policies implemented in the regions, which are controlled by the Kurdish parties

*To ensure the full implementation of the Durban Declaration, to encompass the rights of Turkmen, Assyrians and other minorities in Iraq.*¹³

To call UN mission to the Telafer district to document and report on the extreme human rights violations

Thank you Mr. Chairperson

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