



# CONGRES MONDIAL AMAZIGH

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TUNISIA

Alternative report by Congrès Mondial Amazigh

Economic, social and cultural exclusion  
of the Amazighs of Tunisia

## Preamble

On the occasion of the presentation of the periodic report of Tunisia to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, meeting in its 59th session from 19 September to 7 October 2016 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, the Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA), a human rights NGO, would like to present the differences between the Tunisian legislation and its implementation and the international Convention on economic, social and cultural rights, particularly regarding the Amazigh people (Berbers) of this country.

### 1- Introduction

The Amazigh are the indigenous people of North Africa. Since ancient times their territories (which range from the Siwa Oasis in Egypt to the Canary Islands) experienced several waves of invaders: Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Spaniards, Turks, Italians and French. Despite assimilation policies pursued relentlessly by successive colonizers, the Amazigh people, especially those living in the most inaccessible areas (mountains and deserts) were able to preserve their ancestral identity. They are now thirty million unevenly distributed over ten countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt (Siwa), Spain (Canary Islands, Ceuta, Melilla), Niger, Azawad (northern Mali) Burkina Faso and Mauritania. The vast majority of the people live in Morocco and Algeria. Tamazight, the Amazigh language has an original writing system, Tifinagh developed there over 3,000 years, but it is also written into universal characters (Latin characters).

In Tunisia more than in other countries, the Amazigh populations are difficult to count accurately due to a share of the lack of official statistics and also their vast geographical spread. Our estimates based both on our observations in the field, on regional demographics and on independent studies, the Amazigh represent approximately 10% of the total population, or one million people. They are mainly concentrated in the south of Tunisia (Djerba, Matmata, Tataouine, Medenine, Kebili, Tozeur) but also still several groups forming the villages of a few hundred to several thousands people on the Mediterranean coast west of country, along the border with Algeria (Tebessa Mountains, El Kef, Siliana) and the Gafsa region. They are also likely to have migrated to Europe and in major Tunisian cities where they perform the particular artisan or merchant trades.

### 2- The Amazighs in Tunisia, a hidden identity

The official position of Tunisia on the Amazigh issue is simply that the latter does not exist. The report of Tunisia submitted to the CESCR also removes entirely because at no time did not even mention the word Amazigh or Berber. On the other hand, paragraph 2 it is recalled that "Tunisia is a state (...) whose religion is Islam and the Arabic language." Thus, for a simple authoritarian and misrepresentation, Amazigh existence is erased and the Tunisian landscape. The only remains of this "lost civilization" are to be "preserved" in museums or appear in traditional crafts and folklore, exploited for tourism purposes. The Amazigh language spoken by hundreds of thousands of people from north to south of Tunisia would be a local dialect, derived from Arabic. The other "evidence" to deny the existence of the Amazigh in Tunisia is that, according to the authorities, no claims nor claims its Amazigh there.

The truth is that the Amazigh people of this country do not dare to claim their identity because of the sense of inferiority to the Arab-Islamic identity imposed for centuries and fear of stigma, rejection and repression. Accordingly, the Amazigh Tunisia dare not even speak freely and without fear they are

Amazigh and go to forego speak their language in public areas. They thus preserve the danger at the price of silence and repression of their identity.

The Amazigh in Tunisia is completely prohibited and only authorized identity proclaimed and must defend every citizen is the Tunisian identity, based on Islamic and Arab identity. Any assertion or claim of another identity, including the Amazigh identity, can be described by the authorities as an act of treason.

Consequently, Tunisia, despite having ratified the 01/13/1967 International Convention for the elimination of all forms of racial discriminations, do no respect the principles, including those concerning non-discrimination for reasons related to language, culture or ethnic origin.

### 3- A legislation of exclusion for the Amazighs

After the "revolution" of 2011, it was hoped that the "new Tunisia" would engage in a democratic process and reconcile with its history and all its components, without exclusion. But the new Constitution adopted in 2014 continues to deny the existence of the Amazighs and proclaims ethnic uniqueness, linguistic and religious Tunisians who all belong to the "culture and civilization of the Arab and Muslim nation". Article 1 of the Constitution states says that "Islam is the religion" of Tunisia and "Arabic language". Article 5 confirms that "the Republic of Tunisia is part of the Arab Maghreb". We find in the Constitution not a word, not a single reference to the Amazighs Tunisia, however cradle of the Amazigh civilization and inscribed in the historical, human, cultural and gazetteer of this country.

During the debate that preceded the adoption of the new Constitution of Tunisia, all elected by the National Assembly refused to meet with representatives of the Tunisian Association of Amazigh Culture (ATCA) who solicited them.

The Tunisian government is also in complete contradiction when he says in his report that the country "has been brewing various peoples and civilizations" and concluded that "the values of tolerance and respect for others are deeply rooted in the Muslim civilization to which Tunisia belongs. " How Tunisia result of "mixing of peoples and civilizations" becomes suddenly and exclusively "Arab-Islamic"? The report of the Tunisian government does not explain it.

In fact, the Tunisian state araboislamiste more than ever, tolerates no difference, neither language nor culture, not even that which constitutes the substrate identity of this country and the entire North African region. Unfortunately the Tunisian pseudo-revolution has advanced the country nothing.

The Tunisian National Pact adopted in 1988 also excluded the Amazigh identity as it defines the identity of the Tunisian people only as "an Arab-Islamic identity" and proclaims that Tunisia, "an integral part of the Arab world and the Islamic nation attached to its Arab identity and its Islamic identity "and" arabization is a pressing requirement civilization. " This is clearly a brutal and unjust denial statement yet perennial Amazigh reality in Tunisia.

The code for the protection of the child adopted in 1995 strengthens discrimination against the Amazigh children. Article first advocates of raising the child "in the pride of their national identity (...) and the feeling of civilizational national, Maghreb, Arab and Islamic". The Amazigh child is ignored and his identity determinants rejected, which puts it at a disadvantage compared to the Arab child.

This is a perfect break in particular with Article 2 on the fight against discrimination, Article 13 on the right to education and Article 15 on participation in cultural life.

#### 4- Discriminatory practices

For nearly half a century the Tunisian government exerts the most serious discrimination in all areas, against Amazigh citizens. Some examples:

- The child Amazigh undergoes an education system that falsifies history, encounters his personal beliefs, suppresses freedom of conscience,
- The Amazigh names are banned (Decree No. 85 of 12.12.1962)
- There are no Amazigh language information in print and Tunisian public broadcast media,
- There is no Amazigh cultural production benefiting from public funds,
- The Amazigh people of Tunisia have no right to cultural expression in their language,
- The political and religious discourse are anti-Amazigh, prejudice and negative stereotypes (the Amazigh would arrears, wild, Jews, bad Muslims, separatists ...) are freely and publicly expressed and never punished by the courts,
- The territories where the Amazighs living are among the poorest of Tunisia. It was followed by a forced exodus from the 1960s to facilitate the destruction of the millennium architecture Amazigh villages of Tunisia.

Therefore Amazigh populations in Tunisia are subjected to discrimination and violations of their economic, social, cultural and linguistic rights.

#### Conclusion

In Tunisia, legislation is finally working to protect only the Tunisian identity officially defined solely by reference to its Arab-Islamic identity. The official denies Tunisia as part of itself, the Amazigh party. Also, this legislation and its implementation seriously undermine the fundamental rights of Amazigh people of this country. The populations of these assimilation process continues effectively, forced march, which is a very serious threat to their extinction in the near future. This would be the completion of a form of ethnocide.

It is also important to note that no Amazigh associations were involved in drafting the report of the Tunisian government.

In conclusion, the Congrès Mondial Amazigh makes the following recommendations:

- Recognize the language and culture of the Amazigh indigenous people of Tunisia and the protection and promotion as requested by the Committee against racism and racial discrimination in 2009,
- Take legislative and administrative measures to ensure the teaching of the Amazigh language at all school levels and encourage knowledge of the history and the Amazigh culture as a living culture of Tunisia,
- Repeal Decree No. 85 of 12.12.1962 and allow registration of Amazigh first names in the records of the civil state,
- Take legislative, judicial and administrative to prosecute and punish acts of incitement to hatred and violence anti-Amazighs,
- Protect and restore Amazigh heritage and register with the UNESCO as world heritage,

- Ending discrimination against Amazigh associations which receive no state support,
- Ensure smooth running of cultural activities organized by the Amazigh cultural associations, without prohibition or restriction,
- Make available to the general public the periodic reports of the State and make known the findings of the monitoring bodies of international treaties.

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