



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General  
26 October 2023

Original: English

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## Human Rights Committee 139th session

### Summary record of the 4040th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 10 October 2023, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant**  
(continued)

*Fifth periodic report of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (CCPR/C/VEN/5;  
CCPR/C/VEN/Q/5; CCPR/C/VEN/RQ/5)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Gil Pinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), introducing his country's fifth periodic report (CCPR/C/VEN/5), said that his Government was committed to promoting and guaranteeing human rights, including civil and political rights. During the reporting period, however, the population's enjoyment of such rights had been negatively affected by the strategy of the Government of the United States and the international far right to trigger regime change in Venezuela through continual acts of aggression, attempts to stage a coup d'état and to assassinate high-level officials, sabotage of the oil industry and public services, violence, terrorism and the imposition of unilateral coercive measures. In 2021, for instance, the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights had found that such measures had had a devastating effect on the human rights situation in Venezuela.
3. The Office of Foreign Assets Control of the United States and other foreign agencies had imposed over 930 restrictive or punitive measures on Venezuela, significantly reducing the Government's ability to obtain financing and procure the goods and services required to meet the population's basic needs. Foreign Governments had supported attempts by national political actors to attack the country's democratic institutions, had refused to recognize his country's legitimate authorities and, since 2013, had repeatedly promoted and financed the violent demonstrations that had erupted in the country. Demonstrators had used firearms, home-made weapons and explosives, resulting in deaths, injuries and serious damage to public and private property. During those demonstrations, children and adolescents had been involved in preparing incendiary bombs, guarding barricades and attacking law enforcement officials.
4. The Government had pursued a policy of promoting national dialogue to resolve disputes in a way that was compatible with the rule of law and would protect the well-being of the population. The President, for example, had made over 500 public calls for dialogue among Venezuelans and had granted pardons to hundreds of individuals who had been prosecuted for their involvement in acts aimed at undermining the country's democratic stability. Regrettably, that dialogue had been interrupted by the kidnapping by the Government of the United States of Alex Saab, a diplomat who had been appointed to represent the Government of Venezuela in the dialogue. The delegation wished to take the opportunity to condemn the arbitrary detention and kidnapping of Alex Saab and to urge the Committee to call for his immediate release.
5. Venezuela was a country in which all citizens, including human rights defenders, were able to exercise their rights on a daily basis. Those rights were protected under the Constitution, national laws and the international treaties ratified by the Government. Sixty-seven laws had been adopted since the new National Assembly had been convened in January 2021, many of which played a key role in promoting the civil and political rights of Venezuelans. The Government had also adopted measures to raise awareness of the Covenant and its applicability in national law.
6. The Venezuelan Government recognized and protected the right to freedom of association; 898 trade union organizations had been registered between 2012 and 2021. As of 2023, there were 3,641 registered communes and 49,183 registered community councils, which brought together almost 10 million Venezuelans.
7. The Constitution provided for a model of democracy in which members of the population shared responsibility and participated actively. The establishment of that model had led to substantial changes in electoral practices, including the introduction of the concept of suffrage as a civil right and the creation of new forms of participation in political life.

8. The country had made significant progress in terms of women's rights and had strengthened measures for the prevention and punishment of all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. The right to life was inviolable in Venezuela. Punishments were handed down to any law enforcement official found to have violated the rules on the progressive and differentiated use of force. Slavery and related practices, such as servitude and trafficking in persons, were prohibited under the Constitution. The Government had adopted a number of laws to guarantee the protection of the physical integrity of persons.

9. The Government was tackling corruption head-on. In recent years, the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic had conducted more than 10,000 administrative proceedings under the Anti-Corruption Act. Those proceedings had resulted in penalties being handed down to 5,109 public servants. In 2023, the National Assembly had adopted organic and special laws aimed at strengthening the Government's capacity to effectively combat crimes against public assets.

10. The Ombudsman's Office continued to fulfil its mandate to promote and protect human rights. The National Human Rights Council, as the body responsible for coordinating and promoting national human rights policies, continued to ensure that the Government followed a rights-based approach in all its work. Ongoing and postgraduate-level training on human rights was delivered at a number of universities and schools that prepared students for careers in the military and in the security, public defence, judicial, prosecution and prison services.

11. His Government attached paramount importance to addressing human rights issues in an objective, impartial and non-politicized manner and in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation that was free of double standards. He looked forward to a constructive dialogue based on mutual respect and to hearing the recommendations of Committee members.

12. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that the purpose of the dialogue was to determine whether the State party's cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court would serve to address the serious, systematic and massive human rights violations reported by numerous regional and international bodies. The State party's comments on unilateral coercive measures were not pertinent to discussions concerning its efforts to implement the Covenant.

13. The Committee had received alarming reports that human rights defenders who had travelled to Geneva to participate in the dialogue had been interrogated by the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service. Accordingly, she wished to recall that States parties had no right to take reprisals against civil society representatives who had cooperated with the human rights treaty bodies and to remind the State party of its obligation to protect the freedom and safety of those individuals once they had returned home. The Committee's rapporteur on reprisals would follow up on that issue after the dialogue.

14. Noting that the State party had mentioned just one court decision in which the Covenant had been cited, she wished to know whether the Covenant had been referenced in other decisions. If so, could the State party provide examples of such decisions? More generally, it would be helpful to know what the legislative branch had done to implement the Covenant and give effect to the Committee's interpretations of its provisions. She would welcome information on the legal value of international treaties and the Committee's decisions and recommendations under Venezuelan law and on whether a mechanism was in place for the implement of those decisions and recommendations.

15. She would like to know why the State party had failed to comply with the constitutional procedure for the declaration and extension of states of emergency when decreeing two states of emergency in response to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the economic challenges facing the State party. She would be grateful for the delegation's comments regarding reports that the executive branch had taken advantage of the states of emergency to exercise the lawmaking functions of the National Assembly. She wondered why the State party had failed to notify the Secretary-General of its decision to exercise its right of derogation under article 4 of the Covenant and whether safeguards had been put in place during the states of emergency to ensure that the

Government respected the intended scope of the derogations provided for under that article and detailed in general comment No. 29 (2001).

16. The delegation might provide information on the measures taken to prevent members of the security forces from subjecting individuals to enforced disappearance, whether for long or shorter periods of time. It would be useful to learn whether a mechanism had been created to track any progress made in locating disappeared persons, return the bodies of disappeared persons to their families and identify and prosecute the perpetrators. She wished to know what the State party had done to ensure that members of the intelligence, military and police services who had carried out enforced disappearances were held accountable for those acts.

17. She would be grateful for the delegation's response to allegations that private agents had used lethal force against civilians considered to be opponents of the Government. She wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that the security forces acted in compliance with international rules on the protection of life. She wondered whether any investigations had been opened into extrajudicial and summary executions carried out by the authorities or tolerated by them and, if so, what stage those investigations had reached. It would be helpful to know how many criminal proceedings concerning such offences had been initiated and what sentences had been handed down to perpetrators. Did the State party have a reliable register of violent deaths, including those that had occurred during peaceful protests?

18. **Ms. Kpatcha Tchamdja** said that she would like to know what specific activities had been carried out as part of the technical assistance provided to the Ombudsman's Office by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She would be interested to learn what steps the State party intended to take to ensure that the Ombudsman's Office was independent from the Government. She would be grateful for information on the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman's Office over the previous three years, the number of prosecutions initiated in response to such complaints and the nature of the sentences handed down.

19. The Committee had taken note of the measures adopted to address the issue of forced sterilization and would like to know what impact those measures had had in reducing the number of victims of that practice. It would be helpful to hear what steps had been taken to ensure that free, prior and informed consent was obtained from persons undergoing sterilization, particularly adolescents, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, women living in poverty and other vulnerable women. She wished to know how many complaints of forced sterilization had been received to date, whether prosecutions had been brought and what measures had been taken to compensate victims for the harm suffered. The delegation might comment on reports that, in 2018, a doctor had been dismissed from his job in a hospital in the State of Trujillo for refusing to perform sterilization surgery on a 22-year-old patient who, in the doctor's view, failed to meet the minimum health requirements.

20. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that it would be useful to hear the delegation's comments on the rationale behind the lack of transparency in the management of the State party's public finances, given the high levels of corruption reported by international anti-corruption watchdog organizations. He wondered why successive Administrations had taken to establishing parallel funds and other mechanisms that escaped parliamentary scrutiny and other mechanisms for ensuring accountability, why there was no public oversight of government spending or procurement, and why the identity of government contractors was deemed to be confidential. The Committee would be interested in learning how the State party planned to increase transparency in public spending and contracting and why it provided no information on the size of the State apparatus, State-owned companies and their executives, or audits of major government-owned enterprises.

21. He would be interested to hear why so few asset verification procedures had been instituted by the Comptroller General. He was curious to learn whether any investigations had been opened in that connection and, if so, what their outcomes had been. Had the work of the anti-corruption body established in 2014 yielded any results? The delegation might also wish to comment on the veracity of reports that nearly one-third of senior army officers were also owners of government contracting companies in key industries.

22. It would be helpful if the reporting State could explain the striking discrepancy between the small number of investigations reported by the Public Prosecution Service into acts of money-laundering, corruption and drug and arms trafficking in which State party officials were implicated and the number of State party officials who had pleaded guilty or been convicted of such acts in proceedings conducted by the United States of America, which was significantly higher.

23. He would welcome clarification about the criteria for transferring ownership of Venezuelan mines to state governors, other officials and public or private companies affiliated with the governing party. The delegation might also kindly comment on the overall impact of corruption, give an estimate of the amount misappropriated from the public coffers and provide an update on the status of the investigations into corruption in different State bodies that had been initiated in March 2023. He was curious to know whether it was true that human rights defenders and public officials who had reported cases of corruption in government agencies had been arraigned on dubious charges such as “criminal association” and “disclosure of confidential information” and that the National Telecommunications Commission had banned public debate on allegations of corruption or offences attributed to State officials or members of their families.

24. Given the high levels of gender-based violence and the widespread impunity for such crimes in the State party, he would like to know what the timelines were for the passage of the implementing regulations for the Organic Act on Women’s Right to a Violence-Free Life and for the establishment of specialized courts with jurisdiction over offences involving violence against women. He wondered what progress had been made towards the implementation of gender-sensitive protocols for the investigation and of cases involving acts of violence against women. Additional information would be welcome on gender-sensitive training on victim support for judges, prosecutors, public officials and police officers and on any steps taken to improve public access to information about complaint channels and procedures for reporting domestic violence.

25. He would like to know if the State party planned to establish a nationwide database on gender-based violence and whether any new measures were envisaged to enhance the protection of victims and persons at risk of such violence and to improve access to comprehensive services by, for example, establishing additional shelters.

26. **Mr. Quezada Cabrera** said that he wished to know whether criminal or civil prosecutions of members of the military for engaging in same-sex relations had ceased after article 565 of the Organic Code of Military Justice had been found unconstitutional and thus null and void. In the light of the recent arbitrary arrest of 33 gay men in a sauna in the city of Valencia on such charges as “outrage against modesty”, “criminal association” and “disturbance of the peace”, the delegation might also kindly clarify the situation of civilians in that regard. He would welcome statistics on investigations into allegations of violence against LGBTIQ+ persons conducted by the Specialized Prosecutor’s Office for the Protection of Human Rights and Gender Diversity. Statistics on criminal charges brought by the Specialized Prosecutor’s Office in that connection would also be appreciated, as would information on any convictions handed down and the compensation afforded to victims. He wondered what progress had been made in the development of an administrative procedure to enable persons to change their name for reasons of gender identity.

27. It would be helpful if the delegation could furnish statistics on violent deaths that had occurred in what were known as “peace zones”, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic or national origin and economic status of the victims, after the launch of the National Plan for Comprehensive Prevention in Zones of Peace 2019–2025. Up-to-date statistics on the number of deaths in custody, the measures taken to prevent deaths attributed to prison violence, and the number and type of criminal proceedings instituted, convictions handed down and sanctions imposed would also be appreciated. He wished to know whether the deaths of 46 inmates at Los Llanos prison in Guanare in May 2020 had been investigated and, if so, what the outcome had been.

28. **Ms. Bassim** said that she wished to know what steps the State party had taken to tackle gender inequality in rural and poor areas. She wondered whether the Government was supporting measures to promote gender equality in the workplace, such as the provision of

childcare services at people's workplaces, equal pay for equal work, parental leave and merit-based career advancement. She would also like to know whether the Government fostered women's economic empowerment by promoting entrepreneurship, home-based working arrangements and technical and vocational training. It would be useful to know how the State party ensured access to health care, education and social welfare services for women with disabilities, how many women held senior positions in management and decision-making bodies, and what was being done to combat gender stereotypes.

29. The delegation might kindly describe the steps taken to decriminalize abortion and ensure full, legal and effective access to sexual and reproductive health services and education throughout the country. She would be grateful for data on clandestine abortions, maternal deaths associated with such abortions and teenage pregnancies.

30. Despite the State party's commendable efforts to prevent torture and ill-treatment in custody and during investigations and to prosecute and punish perpetrators of such acts, those practices reportedly continued. The Committee would therefore be grateful to find out exactly what measures the State party was taking to fulfil its obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and what steps it had taken to ensure the effectiveness of the work of the National Commission for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. She wondered whether victims of torture were encouraged to report those crimes and were afforded adequate protection, especially when the victims were persons deprived of their liberty. Could the delegation provide statistics on the number of complaints of torture, investigations, prosecutions and convictions and on the nature of the compensation awarded to victims?

*The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.*

31. **Mr. Gil Pinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the human rights impact of the coercive unilateral measures imposed on his country should not be underestimated. The over US\$ 4 billion withheld illegally by foreign powers was direly needed for his country's development, and the inability to procure vaccines during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic as a result of those measures had undermined the right to health and the right to life of more than 30 million people. It was thus entirely unreasonable to suggest that the unilateral coercive measures depriving the Venezuelan people of crucial resources were not relevant to the human rights situation. It was unfortunate that Committee members should downplay their effect when the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights himself had clearly stated that the unilateral coercive measures had a direct impact on the enjoyment of human rights in Venezuela.

32. It was equally unfortunate that Committee members were drawing on information provided by a body that his Government did not recognize, and whose members had never set foot in Venezuela, in an attempt to substantiate what could only be termed their "judgment" of the human rights situation in his country. The human rights situation was a very serious matter and must be researched with the utmost professionalism by drawing on credible sources, not social media. His delegation would gladly respond to the Committee's questions so long as members refrained from passing judgment, which it was not their place to do.

33. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that the state of exception had been decreed in full compliance with the Constitution. On a number of occasions, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court had rejected the disapproval of the National Assembly concerning the introduction of a state of exception because the National Assembly had been in contempt of the Supreme Court. The state of exception was not a permanent measure, however, and the decree was no longer in force.

34. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that over 100,000 men and women were covered by the national social security system. The system was designed to guarantee the peace and security of Venezuelans, in line with the national objectives set out in the "For all Venezuelan Lives" (A Toda Vida Venezuela) Great Mission, the "Peace Zones" Great Mission and the "Socialist Justice" Great Mission.

35. Human rights had been included as a cross-cutting theme in the curricula of the National Experimental University for Security Services, an institution that provided

Venezuelan officials and civil servants with training up to the postdoctoral level and beyond. A central aim of that institution was to ensure that all officials and civil servants understood the importance of human rights and knew how to deal properly with the citizens with whom they came into contact in the course of their professional duties. The Government had also developed a series of protocols – such as a protocol on the apprehension, guarding, remand custody and transfer of detainees – that were designed to ensure the transparency of law enforcement operations and the protection of persons in conflict with the law. Implementation of the protocols, some of which had been formulated with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was monitored and analysed by the Venezuelan Public Safety Observatory. In September 2022, the Government had also adopted a resolution by which citizens were authorized to make video recordings of police procedures or operations and submit their recordings in court as evidence of police malpractice.

36. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that it was regrettable that the Committee had referred to dubious allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings that had been reported on social networks. That approach demonstrated a lack of professionalism that was uncharacteristic of a high-level international body. According to official statistics, between 2016 and 2023, the Public Prosecution Service had adopted approximately 265,000 measures concerning the investigation and punishment of violations of human rights by civil servants, including police and military personnel. As a result of those measures, over 8,000 civil servants had been charged with human rights-related offences and nearly 1,500 individuals had been convicted. Those figures reflected the strength of the Government's resolve to give full effect to the Constitution and all national legislation on human rights. The Public Prosecution Service demanded the highest standards of professionalism from its staff to ensure that anyone guilty of violating another person's human rights was held to account and punished.

37. **Mr. Gil Pinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country had already addressed many of the issues raised by the Committee in its previous meetings with other human rights treaty bodies. Although the delegation was happy to repeat the answers it had given to other committees, he considered that it was a somewhat inefficient use of the time allotted for their dialogue.

38. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that women in her country were paid the same wages and enjoyed the same opportunities as men. There were an equal number of male and female judges serving on the Supreme Court, and women were increasingly well represented in the National Assembly. Gender stereotypes were also progressively being eliminated. For example, the proportion of female students at the National Experimental University for Security Services, a traditionally male-dominated institution, had risen to over 38 per cent. Furthermore, the Government had taken a number of measures to promote family planning, including by improving sex education at all levels of schooling.

39. Special efforts had been made to combat gender-based violence and to give women the courage to speak out about any abuse they might be suffering. The VEN 911 and 0800 Mujeres (women) telephone services had been set up so that all citizens, not just victims, could report suspected incidents of gender-based violence. Courts specializing in women's protection and gender equality had also been established which had separate chambers so that victims did not have to be in the same room as their abusers.

40. **Mr. Gil Pinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that he was surprised at the amount of time that a Committee member had dedicated to discussing information provided by partisan organizations that amounted to nothing more than instruments of propaganda. The members of the Committee were invited to visit his country, where they would see that the reality bore no resemblance to the picture painted by the dubious statistics and ridiculous allegations published by such organizations and repeated by the media.

41. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that a crusade against corruption was being carried out at all levels of the Venezuelan State. Those efforts were led by the Public Prosecution Service and its Anti-Corruption Directorate General, which had 51 offices nationwide specializing in corruption cases. He was extremely surprised

that the Committee had cited statistics from unofficial sources, many of which were engaged in a negative propaganda campaign against his country. The organizations behind those statistics had neither the resources nor the authority to conduct research into corruption in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Only the State itself, through the Public Prosecution Service, could effectively perform that task. According to the figures published by the Service, between 2016 and 2023, its efforts to hold civil servants to account for acts of corruption had resulted in 21,534 charges being filed, 9,398 indictments and 5,365 convictions. To date, over 400 prosecutors had been tried for irregular conduct and corruption offences and more than 40 of them had been convicted. The investigation into corruption at the oil company *Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)*, which had led to a number of arrests of senior staff and managers, was another telling example of the State's commitment to combating corruption.

42. The fight against femicide was central to the Government's efforts to protect women's rights. Between 2016 and 2023, 95 per cent of the femicide investigations carried out by the Public Prosecution Service had resulted in charges being brought. In total, nearly 1,700 people had been charged with that crime.

43. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that the 33 people who had been detained in Valencia had not been arrested because of their sexual orientation. The civil security officers who had made the arrests had been responding to an ordinary complaint about noise disturbance. An investigation into the actions of the officers who had shared photos of the arrested persons was under way.

44. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that the incident in Valencia had been unrelated to the fact that those individuals belonged to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community, which was respected and supported by the Government. The premises in which those individuals had been found had no authorization to be functioning in that area as a nightclub, and neighbours had repeatedly complained about the noise. The persons who had been taken into custody had soon been released.

45. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government to develop a workplan covering nine areas of technical assistance and capacity-building in various State institutions that included the provision of some 15 training workshops in the area of human rights. Work was also being done to build the capacity of the relevant government agencies to act upon the recommendations made by treaty bodies and special procedures and those made in the course of the universal periodic review. The relevant information had been systematized by the National Human Rights Council. Unfortunately, as a consequence of the unilateral coercive measures imposed on his country, the related technology needed to support that follow-up mechanism had become unavailable.

46. His Government had issued invitations to five different special procedures to visit the country. One had already done so, and conversations with the other four were proceeding. Civil society organizations were able to regularly meet and work with the country office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Ombudsman's Office acted independently from the State and had, for example, been instrumental in investigating and bringing to justice the perpetrators of 12 different murders between 2016 and 2019, who had included two members of the armed forces.

47. **Mr. Gil Pinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that many of the delegation's responses had been general in nature because a majority of the questions posed by the Committee had been based on politicized judgments that did not bear any relation to the report submitted by the State party. Nonetheless, more specific, detailed answers would be submitted in writing.

48. **The Chair** said that the members of the Committee were acting as independent experts and did not represent their countries of nationality or any organization. The Committee received information from a wide range of sources, not only the State party. The purpose of the dialogue was precisely to arrive at a clear picture of the human rights situation in the State party. It was a valuable opportunity for the delegation to provide specific answers to the questions raised and provide accurate information to the Committee. She would also



request the delegation to refrain from personal disparaging remarks during the dialogue. The fact that the Committee posed questions regarding matters covered by other treaty bodies was not the result of inattention but rather motivated by the Committee's interest in gathering information directly from the delegation on matters deemed to be of great importance.

49. **Mr. Gómez Martínez** said that the types of disparaging remarks that had been levelled at Committee members during the current meeting were unprecedented. He would like to request that the delegation should refrain from making personal attacks.

50. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that the Committee used the same methodology in preparing for its dialogues with all States parties and did not rely on social media. It was unfortunate that very little specific information had been provided during the dialogue thus far.

51. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that the State party had information that was otherwise unavailable to the Committee; hence the importance of the interactive dialogue. However, in the case at hand, it was also true that information on a range of important issues, including gender-based violence, was not actually publicly available in the State party either. It would no doubt be helpful to receive information in writing following the meetings, but the main objective was to provide specific, detailed information during the dialogue itself.

52. **Ms. Kpatcha Tchamdja** said that she was awaiting answers to the questions that she had asked earlier.

53. **Mr. Quezada Cabrera** said that he would like to know whether the State party planned to take any legislative measures to guarantee the right to a life free of discrimination for reasons of gender identity or sexual orientation and the right to same-sex marriage. He would appreciate further information on the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for the Protection of Human Rights and Gender Diversity and the units set up by the Public Defence Service for the protection and defence of the human rights of members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Both of those organizations had apparently been established quite recently, in 2022, so it would be of great interest to know if they were currently in operation and if they had produced positive results for that community.

54. **Ms. Bassim** said that she would appreciate responses to her earlier questions concerning the empowerment of women and the prevention of torture, whether during the following day's meeting or in writing.

55. **A representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that labelling as an enforced disappearance a situation in which someone was arrested and his or her family did not know his or her whereabouts for a few hours but was then informed of them flew in the face of legal tradition concerning such painful crimes as those committed in the 1970s and 1980s in the southern cone and in Venezuela in the 1960s. Between 2015 and 2022, only 455 alleged cases of enforced disappearance had been registered; investigations into 402 of those cases were ongoing, 10 cases had gone to trial, 40 others had been concluded and, in just 16, the cases had been closed.

56. **Mr. Gil Pinto** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the delegation had reacted in an extremely moderate fashion to the judgmental questions posed by the Committee. All of the Committee's questions would be answered in detail in writing within 48 hours following the conclusion of the dialogue.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*