



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Summary record of the 3093rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 14 August 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

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Combined twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh periodic reports of Iraq

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh periodic reports of Iraq
([CERD/C/IRQ/26-27](#); [CERD/C/IRQ/Q/26-27](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Iraq joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Iraq**, introducing his country's combined twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh periodic reports ([CERD/C/IRQ/26-27](#)), said that his Government had adopted a wide-ranging interministerial programme in October 2022 that provided for extensive reforms to the economic, financial and service sectors. The measures envisaged aimed, inter alia, at supporting internally displaced persons and minority ethnic groups residing in the country, rebuilding areas formerly under the control of Da'esh and reducing inequalities and ensuring compliance with international human rights treaties. The Council of Ministers had approved a national human rights plan for the period 2021–2025 to provide guidance to State institutions, civil society organizations and stakeholders, to support the implementation of recommendations of international human rights bodies and to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.
3. The second national plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) contained several actions aimed at protecting women belonging to ethnic minorities, especially those who had been victims of acts of terrorism, including compensation and reparation initiatives and women's empowerment and capacity-building programmes. The plan was being carried out alongside the national strategy to combat violence against women and girls for the period 2018–2030 and the national strategy for Iraqi women for the period 2023–2030.
4. Efforts were being made to improve the quality of education and raise awareness of the principles of citizenship among all ethnic groups in Iraqi society. Measures taken in that regard included the implementation of capacity-building programmes for educators and educational institutions, the construction of modern schools across the country and the adoption of a national development plan for the period 2024–2028 to promote public and private investment.
5. The Government attached great importance to the issue of trafficking in persons. The Central Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, chaired by the Minister of the Interior and comprising representatives of the security, judicial and executive authorities, was tasked with developing plans, policies and strategies on trafficking in persons, and it had conducted several campaigns to ensure that perpetrators were held accountable and victims received the support they needed. Those efforts had been recognized by the United States Department of State, which had removed Iraq from the Tier 2 watch list in its most recent Trafficking in Persons Report and had awarded the title of Trafficking in Persons Report Hero to the head of the anti-trafficking unit of the Ministry of the Interior.
6. Several legislative measures had been taken with a view to promoting the human rights of all Iraqis, including the amendment of the law regulating elections to the Council of Representatives in 2023, which had introduced quotas for representatives belonging to ethnic minorities. Other measures included the adoption of the Legal Aid Act (No. 7) of 2024, the Retirement and Social Security for Workers Act (No. 18) of 2023 and the Health Insurance Act (No. 22) of 2020 and the amendment to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs Act of 2013. The Yazidi Female Survivors Act (No. 8) of 2021 had been adopted to ensure that survivors of crimes committed by Da'esh could receive support and compensation. Pursuant to the Official Languages Act (No. 7) of 2014, Turkmen had been included as the third language to be used in official communications within the administrative boundaries of Kirkuk Governorate, and the military had been instructed to recognize Turkmen forces as a key element of military formations. The Ministry of Education was responsible for ensuring that Christian schools and other religious schools were free to operate in accordance with their respective religious practices. Ownership of lands and homes in 11 residential complexes had been granted to Yazidis who had been subject to exclusionary policies pursued by the previous regime. The Government had adopted a national policy on

the representation of all ethnic minorities in senior positions in the Iraqi State in accordance with their experience and qualifications and pursuant to article 14 of the Constitution, on non-discrimination. The Ministry of Justice had developed a policy to improve detention conditions by reducing overcrowding and enhancing rehabilitation programmes and was drafting a bill on non-custodial sentencing to support the reintegration of detainees into society.

7. The Government and public institutions maintained a positive relationship with civil society organizations, which enjoyed broad freedoms when carrying out their activities under the new political system. In the interest of strengthening cooperation, a meeting had been held with several civil society organizations in Iraq to discuss relevant issues before the submission of the country's periodic reports.

8. **A representative of Iraq** said that his Government attached great importance to the fulfilment of its international human rights obligations. Iraq was a country of many ethnicities, religions and sects, and its diversity was a source of its strength and wealth. The Government had taken measures to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, belief, race, skin colour and political views, including by bringing domestic legislation into line with the Convention and developing legal frameworks to promote the spirit of citizenship, fraternity and peaceful coexistence among all groups in Iraqi society.

9. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Kurdistan Regional Government had strived to build a society free of discrimination at all levels, and several cases of discrimination had been investigated by the authorities in the previous two years. Between 2019 and 2023, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament had passed 35 laws, considered 7 further bills and amended several existing laws in order to protect public freedoms. Those measures had been taken in the framework of the Regional Government's five-year human rights plan, the implementation of which had been assessed in six reports. Of the 19 recommendations concerning the elimination of discrimination contained in the human rights plan, 15 had been successfully implemented and implementation of 3 recommendations was in progress.

10. Foreign workers registered with the regional Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs enjoyed the same rights as other workers. Between 2008 and the first half of 2024, a total of 88,652 foreign workers had been registered in the region. A high-level committee had been established to regulate the recruitment of foreign workers, a special committee had been set up to inspect the working conditions of female foreign workers, and a hotline had been launched to receive complaints.

11. The Regional Government had collated nearly 25,000 files relating to people abducted by Da'esh; around 3,500 abductees had been freed to date. To support survivors of crimes perpetrated by Da'esh, a monthly grant programme had been announced and a psychotherapy clinic had been established in Dahuk. More than 1,000 survivors had been sent to Germany to receive psychiatric treatment.

12. Efforts were being made to arrest individuals involved in drug use and trafficking, activities that created an insecure and unstable environment for internally displaced persons and hindered the return of people who had fled border communities. Measures taken to improve conditions at correctional facilities included the development of legislation to address overcrowding and the establishment of health centres, record-keeping systems, surveillance systems and complaints mechanisms. Steps had been taken to prevent, investigate and punish cases of torture, including against journalists, and use of the death penalty had been restricted, with 470 people sentenced to death in the region in recent times.

13. The Kurdistan Region hosted around 1 million internally displaced persons and refugees. The Regional Government supported the national Government's policy on the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and had facilitated the return of 271 families to their homes in Hassan Sham. In early August 2024, another 266 families from the same area had voluntarily returned to their homes.

14. General directorates for Turkmen and Syriac studies had been established to protect the cultural rights of ethnic minority groups. A total of 2,565 students were enrolled in the region's 18 Turkmen-language schools and 1,708 students were enrolled in its 24 Syriac-language schools. The study of the Yazidi religion was overseen by a regional

education body in Dahuk. The Regional Government had issued directives ordering that Friday prayers should be free of manifestations of intolerance and had demonstrated its support to 1,800 religious leaders who had promoted peaceful coexistence and rejection of hatred. In one mosque in Erbil, Friday prayers were led in the Turkmen language. To protect the rights of the 30,000 Roma living in the region, the Ministry of the Interior had authorized the establishment of the Roma Cultural Centre and had facilitated the issuance of official documents for Roma.

15. Of the 91 women currently accommodated in the region's five domestic violence shelters, 21 were foreigners. Several measures had been taken to support women and girls in the region, including the adoption of legislation against domestic violence and investigations into cases of child and forced marriage, and women were well represented in high-level and decision-making positions. To combat trafficking in persons, specialist teams had recently visited 196 businesses, and cases had been brought against 13 of those businesses. A total of 62 people had been arrested on trafficking charges, resulting in 8 convictions, and 90 of the 190 investigations carried out had been completed.

16. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would welcome statistical data on the ethnic and ethno-religious composition of the Iraqi population, including migrants and refugees, together with economic and social indicators disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and disability. He would be grateful for additional information on the Federal Supreme Court ruling dated 27 April 2024, which called for the removal of ethnicity from the categories of data to be collected in the population census, and wished to know when the next census would take place. It would be interesting to learn whether the principle of self-identification would be incorporated into the next census and, if so, how that would be done. He would also like to know how the State party assessed the extent to which the different ethnic and ethno-religious groups in Iraq were able to exercise their economic and social rights to housing, education, employment and health care on an equal footing.

17. He would welcome information on the mandate and activities of the High Commission for Human Rights with regard to combating racial discrimination and evaluating the implementation of the Convention. He wished to know whether it was allocated sufficient resources to enable it to discharge its mandate fully and effectively. He would appreciate information on the process of selecting commissioners, including an explanation of how the transparent and participatory nature of that process was ensured, and wondered why no commissioners had been appointed since 2021. It would be helpful to know whether the legislative framework had been amended to limit terms of office and ensure that the High Commission enjoyed financial autonomy and appropriate levels of funding. He also wished to know whether steps had been taken to ensure that the High Commission's services were accessible in all minority languages. He would appreciate clarification regarding the current status of the High Commission in the light of the promulgation of resolution No. 23516 of 2023 by the Council of Ministers, which had made the Minister of Justice responsible for overseeing the administrative and financial matters of the High Commission, in contradiction of the Paris Principles.

18. He would be grateful for information on measures taken by the State party to fully incorporate the Convention into domestic law and ensure its precedence over national legislation in the event of conflict. In particular, he would like an update on the adoption of a bill developed with the intention of domesticating those international treaties to which Iraq had acceded. In addition, the delegation might wish to provide examples of decisions related to racial discrimination handed down by the domestic courts and of the direct application or invocation of the Convention by or before the courts. An update on the mandate and activities of the Legal Review and Amendment Committee would be appreciated, as would information on any measures taken to organize training and awareness-raising campaigns for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and the general public that would facilitate the invocation of the Convention before the courts.

19. **Mr. Amir** (Country Task Force), noting with appreciation the high-level, diverse composition of the Iraqi delegation, said that the strength and resilience of the Iraqi people was remarkable. Despite years of war driven by Western powers, Iraq had returned to peace, enjoying organized democratic elections and successes across various political, economic and cultural fields.

20. **A representative of Iraq** said that the former regime had used the results of national censuses to justify ethnic cleansing and reinforce ethnic discrimination. The security situation in the period following 2003 – in particular the occupation by Da'esh – had made it impossible to conduct censuses for a while. The State party was keen to return to censuses as a means of promoting citizenship and national unity and supporting justice and equality. A census would be conducted in October 2024, with the support of international organizations and in line with international standards and human rights principles. Pursuant to judicial rulings, the census would not include questions on religious sect or on ethnicity in order to prevent census data from being used to exercise power over certain groups. The Federal Supreme Court had further ruled that censuses should be used only for developmental and economic purposes and not to control the size of ethnic or religious groups.

21. **A representative of Iraq** said that Iraq was a diverse melting pot of ethnic and religious groups, who lived side by side in peaceful coexistence. The Government had taken many steps to protect the various communities in Iraq. In addition to the constitutional provisions setting out the equality of all Iraqis regardless of religion, sex, race or colour and protecting the administrative, political, cultural and educational rights of all groups, the Government had made a commitment to protecting the ethnic diversity and demographic mix of Iraq. Several high-level committees had been established to tackle specific issues, including the prevention of demographic change and preservation of the Christian population in Nineveh Plains, the restoration of property rights, and the combating of hate speech and promotion of peaceful coexistence. A media policy on minorities had been adopted to raise awareness of minority identities in Iraq, and Sabeans had been granted ownership of baptismal sites to allow them to practise religious rites.

22. To support the return of displaced persons, government funding had been allocated for the reconstruction of Sinjar and Nineveh Plains, and the Government had ordered all security files on displaced persons, especially Yazidis, to be closed. Compensation was available for persons in those regions who had suffered damages, and financial incentives were available to families who had been displaced to camps in the Kurdistan region to encourage their return. A programme to combat unemployment among returnees had been adopted; it included the allocation of a percentage of job roles to returnees and the inclusion of returnees in the social protection allowance system. In addition, the Government was seeking input from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the development of a strategy to combat hate speech.

23. There were 317,889 refugees and asylum-seekers from eight countries living in Iraq. All refugees and asylum-seekers were able to live a normal life in the country, and all their needs were met.

24. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Federal Supreme Court had issued various rulings reaffirming the principles of equality and non-discrimination in respect of all components of Iraqi society. In addition, the Federal Court of Cassation had issued rulings reaffirming the principles of equality of treatment and opportunity at work and the prohibition of both direct and indirect discrimination.

25. In accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure, the human rights courts had a legal mandate to investigate offences. In 2023, a total of 17,124 cases of human rights violations had been reported across the whole of Iraq; of those, 402 had involved the violation of the right to life, 1,075 had involved torture, 1,268 had involved electronic blackmail and 3 had involved the violation of press freedoms. More than 1,400 investigations had been conducted in connection with human rights violations, and some 83 per cent of reported cases had been resolved. Thus far in 2024, 55 criminal convictions had been secured in connection with trafficking in persons.

26. **A representative of Iraq** said that the establishment of human rights courts in Iraq represented a qualitative improvement to the judicial and legal system. Those courts had jurisdiction over all types of human rights violations, including torture in prisons, violations committed during criminal investigations, violence against women and trafficking in persons, and were able to issue legally binding rulings to punish such acts.

27. **A representative of Iraq** said that the State party accorded priority to the promulgation of domestic laws relating to the rights provided for in the Convention. Work

was ongoing to draft a bill on the protection of diversity and the prevention of discrimination, the provisions of which would be closely aligned with the Convention. The Government was also working on a bill on hate speech and incitement to sectarian and racial hatred. In the meantime, racial discrimination and hate speech were criminalized under various other laws, including Act No. 32 of 2016, which banned the Baath Party and all racist or terrorist entities, parties and activities, and the Political Parties Act (No. 36 of 2015), which prohibited the pursuit of racist policies by political parties. Various other laws, including the Constitution, protected religious and ethnic diversity.

28. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Office of the Prime Minister had set up a hotline to receive complaints of human rights violations. All complaints were referred to the Supreme Judicial Council for legal action. Thus far, 3,000 complaints had been received from Iraqis of all backgrounds, of which 2,500 had ultimately been referred to the human rights courts.

29. The media and online platforms played a role in raising awareness about the rights of the various communities in Iraq. State television channels broadcast shows in minority languages to promote cultural development and combat discrimination.

30. **Mr. Guissé** said that he wondered how, without collecting statistics on ethnicity during censuses, the State party intended to measure the size of ethnic groups and ensure that quotas for ethnic participation in political parties were met.

31. **Mr. Amir** said that he wished to learn what the Government was doing to normalize relations with national minorities.

32. **Ms. Esseneme** said that the Committee would be interested to know whether the State party maintained gender-based quotas for elected office, whether such quotas had been met during the recent legislative elections and, if no such quotas existed, what had been done to increase women's participation and ensure gender equality in the management of public affairs. She would also welcome information on the judgments and penalties handed down and the reparations granted in cases of racial discrimination.

33. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she would like to know why draft legislation intended to combat racial discrimination had made little headway and whether the Government would ensure that any such text included a definition of racial discrimination in line with article 1 of the Convention.

34. **Ms. Tebie** said that she wished to know whether the Convention could be directly invoked before the courts of the State party. She would also like to know how many women and men belonging to ethnic minorities were members of the Council of Representatives.

35. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would like to know whether any steps were being taken to repeal existing legislation relating to the distribution of powers in the State party, which could exclude certain minorities, and to what extent the Turkmen, Chaldean, Syrian, Assyrian and Armenian minorities and Iraqis of African descent were represented in the parliament. He would welcome information on any planned measures to repeal legal provisions that prohibited women from marrying foreign citizens and prevented them from passing on Iraqi nationality to their children if they did so. Lastly, he wished to know whether the State party planned to recognize the competence of the Committee to consider individual communications under article 14 of the Convention.

36. **Mr. Rayess** said that he would like to know the reasons behind the banning of a political party by the State party in 2016.

37. **A representative of Iraq** said that the State party did not operate an official system of political or ethnic quotas. Political consensus, legal and constitutional mechanisms and a political custom not enshrined in law helped to ensure that the parliament was suitably representative of the country's communities without the need to compile statistics or adhere to quotas.

38. **A representative of Iraq** said that the most recent census dated back to 2003. Another one was being planned for development and economic purposes, without affecting the representation of communities in the parliament, the military or the Government.

39. The Constitution permitted the forming of political parties and organizations, provided that it was done according to a democratic process. The establishment or operation of political parties could be banned if the party was founded on racism or on a takfirist approach.

40. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Constitution stipulated that women should represent no fewer than 25 per cent of members of the Council of Representatives. Electoral legislation currently in force also provided that women should represent at least 25 per cent of candidates on open lists. A high-level committee had been set up to encourage women to stand for elections and participate in political life, and the Government had cooperated with United Nations bodies to support female candidates and to protect them against online abuse. No complaints had been filed in connection with such abuse in the provinces. There were currently three female ministers and three female deputy ministers in Government. The country also had 128 female judges and 111 female chief executive officers. Some 2,000 women worked for the Ministry of Defence. As part of government initiatives relating to human rights and women's empowerment, the Prime Minister had set up a council under his leadership with the involvement of various ministries, and a number of seminars had been held with NGOs to support work in the areas in question.

41. **A representative of Iraq** said that, after stalling in the wake of political events in 2021, the board of commissioners of the High Commission for Human Rights would be formed over the coming months. All citizens could apply, in line with the Paris Principles, and more than 3,000 men and women had done so, with 100 still in the running. A committee including representatives of the parliament and civil society organizations was overseeing the process, which was being observed by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The High Commission was an independent body according to article 102 of the Constitution and was temporarily under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice.

42. **A representative of Iraq** said that draft legislation to combat racial discrimination was currently being examined. All of its provisions complied with the terms of the Convention. It included definitions of discrimination and the diversity of minorities, as well as sanctions. Further legislation had been drafted to prevent incitement to hatred or racial discrimination. Until the laws in question came into force, article 14 of the Constitution prohibited racial discrimination, stating that all Iraqis were equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, colour or ethnicity.

43. **A representative of Iraq** said that, although the right to pass one's nationality on to one's children had previously been enjoyed only by fathers, it had now been extended to mothers. Iraqi women who were married to non-nationals could choose the nationality of their children according to the Iraqi Nationality Act (No. 26) of 2006. After running the relevant nationality checks, there was no discrimination when it came to issuing children with Iraqi identity documents.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m.

44. **Mr. Guissé** said that it was not clear how the lack of data in the State party relating to people's ethnic origin and self-identification, which made it difficult to take the existence of different ethnic groups into consideration, could be compatible with a quota system for the political representation of the different ethnic groups. He would welcome further clarification on the subject.

45. He wished to know what steps had been taken to draft and adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that included a definition of direct and indirect discrimination and prohibited racial discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention. He wondered whether the 2016 bill on diversity and anti-discrimination covered those points and would like to hear more about the substance of that particular text.

46. He would like the delegation to provide further information, including specific examples, on the implementation of the national human rights plan (2021–2025) and on any assessments of the plan thus far. It would be useful to receive detailed information about how the plan addressed the situation of persons vulnerable to racial discrimination, such as ethnic and ethno-religious groups, the Roma community and people of African descent. He wished

to know whether representatives of those groups had been consulted during its preparation and implementation and what institutional entity was responsible for implementing it.

47. It would be useful to know what steps were being taken to adopt a comprehensive strategy and national plan of action to combat racism, and what measures the State party had taken to ensure that the Criminal Code and other relevant legislation prohibited and punished racist hate speech, incitement to racial hatred or discrimination and racist hate crimes, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention. Further details on the legislation being prepared to prohibit hate speech would be welcome, as would a brief explanation of the current legal framework to combat hate speech and hate crimes.

48. The Committee would like to receive detailed information about complaints lodged with the courts or any other national institution, including the High Commission for Human Rights, concerning acts of racial discrimination, racist hate speech and racist hate crimes, including on the Internet and in the media. He wondered whether judicial or other remedies were available to victims of offences in those categories and, if so, how many complaints had been submitted and what the results had been in terms of numbers of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, sanctions or disciplinary measures for perpetrators and reparations for victims. Did the State party have a system in place to collect disaggregated data on complaints concerning racial discrimination and hate speech?

49. He would like the delegation to detail measures taken to combat hate crime, incitement to hate crime and racist and other hate speech, including in political discourse, in the media, online and in social media. Information about the mandate and activities of the Supreme Committee to Counter Hate Speech within the Office of the Prime Minister would also be welcome.

50. He wondered what specific measures had been taken or were planned to ensure that the police and other law enforcement officers did not engage in racial discrimination, including racially motivated violence and racial profiling. He would like the delegation to explain whether the State party's legislative framework prohibited racial profiling and violence by law enforcement officers and provide information on measures to ensure accountability for incidents of discriminatory violence and on the number of complaints, investigations and convictions relating to incidents of discriminatory police violence and brutality.

51. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Government considered that collecting data on religious affiliation could cause problems in regions of the country where different religious communities lived side by side. Therefore, the identity documents issued to residents of those regions no longer contained information about their ethnic origin or religion. For the same reason, the forthcoming population census would not include questions on ethnicity or religion.

52. **A representative of Iraq** said that a number of rulings had been handed down by the Federal Supreme Court and other high courts invoking the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities set out in articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. They included decisions No. 175 of 2019, No. 145 of 2018 and No. 37 of 2015. Judges could also invoke the Convention and any other international instruments ratified by Iraq in their rulings. A total of 1,334 complaints concerning human rights violations had been brought before domestic courts, and 236 cases relating to presumed acts of torture had been heard by courts between the start of 2023 and the end of March 2024.

53. **A representative of Iraq** said that a significant number of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities were employed by the Ministry of Defence, including nearly a thousand Christians and over five thousand Yazidis. Those employees did not encounter any discrimination in the discharge of their functions. The Ministry had carried out a range of activities to encourage cooperation and solidarity between different ethnic communities, including distributing some 2,000 publications, conducting 1,221 awareness-raising campaigns and holding 35 meetings with tribes. In 2023, it had held several meetings with different communities and conducted various awareness-raising campaigns for civil servants. The Ministry treated all people equally and without discrimination on the grounds of their ethnicity or religion.

54. **A representative of Iraq** said that, in 2022, the Ministry of the Interior had adopted a code of conduct setting out the legal standards and procedures that law enforcement officers must adhere to while enforcing the law. The code established the obligation to treat suspects without discrimination based on their race or religion.

55. **A representative of Iraq** said that, in addition to the bill on hate speech currently being examined by the Government, provisions banning incitement to hatred had been incorporated into the Criminal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Act. For example, under article 372 of the Criminal Code, it was prohibited to insult the symbols, prophets or practices of a religion and to deface a religious building.

56. **A representative of Iraq** said that a committee on hate speech had been established at the initiative of the Prime Minister in 2023. Chaired by the Minister of Communications, the committee had established a definition of hate crime in line with international standards and the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The committee had also conducted a comprehensive analysis of hate speech taking into account economic, social, religious and environmental considerations in order to identify the main sources and causes of hate speech and the main communities affected by it. Following the completion of its analysis, subcommittees had been tasked with formulating programmes and activities in line with 11 core objectives, including: raising awareness of the impact of hate speech; supporting victims of hate speech and creating protection and rehabilitation mechanisms; reinforcing legislation and policies; encouraging cooperation between State institutions; strengthening scientific research and analysis; increasing transparency and accountability; strengthening support programmes for communities affected by hate speech; raising awareness among media professionals; and encouraging studies and the sharing of experiences. The impact of the activities initiated by the subcommittees would be reviewed in due course.

57. Every government department was required to put in place programmes to implement the national strategy to combat violent extremism, which the Government had developed in collaboration with United Nations agencies.

58. **A representative of Iraq** said that representatives of State institutions and civil society had participated in a conference on hate speech organized by the Ministry of Justice. One of the outcomes of the conference had been the adoption of a set of principles to ensure his country's adherence to international standards on hate speech, taking into account General Assembly resolution 77/318 on promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech. The principles covered a number of different issues, including the legal framework, hate speech on the Internet and hate speech of a religious nature.

59. **A representative of Iraq** said that the national human rights plan (2021–2025) took into account over 600 recommendations that Iraq had received from treaty- and non-treaty-based mechanisms. The plan, which had been developed with the participation of three civil society organizations, identified the different State institutions that should be responsible for giving effect to its recommendations. The Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Justice, which was responsible for overseeing overall implementation, would publish its third annual progress report the following month.

60. **Mr. Guissé** said that the Committee would appreciate more specific information about the measures that had been taken to implement the Convention, including with regard to training.

61. **Ms. Tlakula** said that the Committee would be grateful for information on the State party's follow-up to its recommendations on minorities in the disputed territories, minority women and citizenship, as requested in its previous concluding observations (CERD/C/IRQ/CO/22-25, para. 20). She would also welcome further information illustrating the extent to which the State party's policies and laws on hate speech were being implemented in practice. In particular, she wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure that all incidents of hate speech by public figures, including politicians, were effectively investigated. It would be interesting to know whether any public figures or politicians had been prosecuted for such offences and what, if any, punishments had been imposed.

62. **Ms. Esseneme** said that insufficient information had been provided on the 1,334 complaints of human rights violations that had been brought before domestic courts. What forms of discrimination had the complaints referred to? What sentences had been handed out to those found guilty? What level of compensation had been awarded to victims?

63. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she wished to share two reflections on the replies provided by the delegation. Firstly, it was important for the State party to take into account that article 1 of the Convention prohibited both direct and indirect discrimination. Secondly, with respect to the implementation of special measures, the State party had the responsibility not just to provide access to equal opportunities on paper but to ensure that such measures achieved tangible results for ethnic and religious minorities.

64. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know whether a regulatory or self-regulatory body had been established to combat the spread of hate speech online and via social media. It would also be useful to know whether the State party had put in place any specific legislation to protect human rights defenders, particularly those belonging to ethnic or religious minorities.

65. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Government's response to the request for follow-up information on paragraphs 20, 24 and 34 of the previous concluding observations had been provided in a timely manner, in communication No. 2182/4/T/12 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 2 December 2019.

66. **A representative of Iraq** said that article 16 of the Constitution established the right of all people to equal opportunities, including in the field of work. The Labour Code prohibited both direct and indirect discrimination and set out penalties for companies found to be in breach of those rules. The Ministry of Labour carried out inspections of workplaces and trade unions to ensure that the code was enforced.

67. **A representative of Iraq** said that, although social media platforms were not rigorously monitored, there had been cases where the authorities had kept the accounts of famous bloggers and other users under observation when they were suspected of spreading harmful content. Similarly, the Media and Communications Commission had the power to take action against television companies that broadcasted prohibited language.

68. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Media and Communications Commission had a department that monitored hate speech. Sanctions could be imposed on both the media company and the individual responsible for promoting such messages and, for more serious offences, media companies could be shut down. Offensive or extremist discourse of a racial, religious or political nature was prohibited under the national election laws, and the Independent High Electoral Commission had disqualified a number of candidates for spreading hate speech during their campaigns.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.