



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 112th session

### Summary record of the 3063rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 17 April 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Balcerzak

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under article 9 of the Convention (*continued*)

*Combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Qatar*

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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-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Qatar*  
([CERD/C/QAT/22-23](#); [CERD/C/QAT/Q/22-23](#))

1. At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Qatar joined the meeting.
2. **A representative of Qatar** said that his country's combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports ([CERD/C/QAT/22-23](#)) had been prepared by a national working group, with the cooperation of all State bodies concerned with the elimination of racial discrimination, many of which were represented in the delegation appearing before the Committee. The country's growing attention to human rights was manifest in national initiatives, including the Qatar National Vision 2030 and its first and second national development strategies. Furthermore, the Emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani Amir, in his address to the General Assembly during its seventy-third session, had stressed that human development and the protection and promotion of human rights were in the forefront of the priorities of the State of Qatar. The promotion and protection of migrant workers, whose pivotal role in the country's unprecedented rates of growth and development was highly appreciated, was of particular importance.
3. Since submitting its combined seventeenth to twenty-first periodic reports in 2018, the country had seen a number of legislative and institutional developments in relation to human rights, including ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; introduction of reforms to the regulatory framework governing migrant workers' rights; and promulgation of laws governing real-estate ownership for non-nationals, political asylum, domestic workers and permanent residency. In 2017, the Council of Ministers had approved the establishment of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking and of a national committee responsible for drafting a national action plan for human rights. His Government had continued to develop strategies to support and strengthen the role of women with a view to promoting their full participation in political life, in accordance with article 34 of the Constitution.
4. **A representative of the National Human Rights Committee** said that the State party had made remarkable progress in developing its legislation and practices to combat discrimination, especially in the area of employment and the protection of workers' rights. Developments of particular note included the abolition of exit permits, the termination of the *kafalah* system and the creation of the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund. The country had also made advances in furthering women's rights, particularly in supporting their employment, including in decision-making positions. The National Human Rights Committee was convinced of the Government's commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights in Qatar. At the same time, the Committee was fully cognizant of the importance of its role in monitoring the reality on the ground – including through the review of legislation, regulations and practices – and making honest recommendations regarding obstacles to compliance with the Convention.
5. Recommendations in its written submission for the interactive dialogue included strengthening the right to form associations and allowing more space for civil society. In addition, the Committee welcomed the fact that a draft law on the rights of persons with disabilities, which provided for their full participation in society and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability, had been approved by the Council of Ministers. He expressed the hope that the Government would consider its recommendations, both in its written submission and its annual reports, and provide more support and resources to the National Human Rights Committee to enable it to carry out its activities.
6. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Rapporteur), noting with approval the high number of female members of the delegation, said that he wished to take the opportunity to pay tribute to Ms. Sheilka Abdulla Ali Al-Misnad, a citizen of Qatar who had served as a valued member of the Committee for four years.

7. Some positive developments had taken place since the previous interactive dialogue with the State party in 2018, such as legislative reforms aimed at terminating the *kafalah* system, but some challenges remained. According to the State party's combined reports, under article 68 (1) of the Constitution, international treaties had the force of law once they had been ratified and published in the Official Gazette. However, he had read in the Constitution itself, under article 68, that treaties relating to citizens' rights entered into force only once they had been "promulgated". He therefore wondered whether the Convention, which governed the rights of both citizens and non-citizens, had been "promulgated" and what status it held in the State party's domestic legal system. Had all of the Convention's provisions been incorporated into national law? He would be grateful for specific examples of cases where the provisions of the Convention had been invoked or directly applied by the courts. He would also be grateful to know about measures that the State party had taken to provide training on the Convention to law enforcement officers, officers of the judiciary and other agents of the State, and to raise awareness about the Convention among the general population, including non-citizens and migrants. Noting that article 1 of the Constitution provided that sharia was the primary source of law, he would be interested to learn how the State party might manage conflicts between national legislation, including sharia, and the provisions of the Convention. In such cases, would the provisions of the Convention prevail?

8. He wished to learn about measures taken by the State party to align the prohibition of discrimination in article 35 of the Constitution with article 1 (1) of the Convention and to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, with a clear definition of racial discrimination that included direct, indirect, multiple and structural forms of discrimination and which covered all areas of law and public life and all grounds for discrimination, namely race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin.

9. Recalling that the Committee had stressed in several of its general recommendations that the provisions of article 4 of the Convention were essential to combating racial discrimination, he would be grateful to learn about measures taken by the State party to establish criminal penalties for acts of racial discrimination and behaviour prohibited under article 4 of the Convention – as, indeed, had been recommended by the Committee in its concluding observations on the State party's previous combined reports ([CERD/C/QAT/CO/17-19](#)) – and to include racial motivation as an aggravating factor in the Criminal Code. He also wished to learn about measures taken by the State party to prevent and combat racist hate speech, hate crimes and incitement to racial discrimination and xenophobia, including in traditional media, online and through social media platforms. In addition, he wondered what measures the State party had taken to facilitate the reporting and investigation of racist hate speech and hate crimes and, specifically, whether the State party had put into place a data collection system and training for law enforcement officers.

10. In its 2022 annual report, the National Human Rights Committee had recommended that the Nationality Act, which was discriminatory against Qatari women, should be amended to ensure equality before the law and eliminate all forms of discrimination. He would be grateful if the delegation could outline the measures taken or envisaged to amend the Nationality Act so as to grant Qatari women the right to transmit their nationality to a foreign spouse and to their children from birth, especially children who would otherwise be stateless.

11. He wished to know what measures the State party had taken to address the concerns raised by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions regarding the lack of legal provisions and procedures for the nomination and dismissal of members of the National Human Rights Committee; to guarantee the Committee's independence and diversity among its membership; and to allocate sufficient financial, technical and human resources to the Committee to allow it to effectively discharge its mandate. In addition, having received information reporting that the Committee had had a limited impact on racial equality and the fight against racism and xenophobia and had taken no measures to determine the extent of racial discrimination based on nationality in Qatar, he would be interested to learn about measures taken to strengthen the Committee's work in those specific areas.

12. Welcoming the news that a national committee had been established to draft a national action plan for human rights, he would be grateful to know when the plan would be adopted and what measures were envisaged to ensure the participation of civil society organizations, including those promoting the rights of migrant workers and the fight against racial

discrimination. He would also be interested to learn about measures taken or envisaged regarding the adoption of a national action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the creation of an independent group for preventing and combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of racism. Lastly, he would be grateful to know more about the measures taken and the programme of activities organized in the State party as part of the International Decade for People of African Descent, and about the participation of individuals of African descent in the design, implementation and monitoring of such initiatives.

13. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that the Committee had recommended, in its concluding observations on the State party's previous combined reports, that the State party should ensure that the National Human Rights Committee had sufficient human and financial resources to carry out its mandate. The State party had duly submitted an interim report following the adoption of those concluding observations, but the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was of the view that the information contained therein was insufficient for determining whether that recommendation had been satisfactorily implemented. In addition, the data provided in the State party's combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports were only as recent as 2021. The delegation might provide information about the budget since then.

14. Similarly, the Committee was not satisfied that the State party had fully implemented its recommendation to end the sponsorship system and related practices, protect migrant workers from abuse and exploitation and ensure the timely payment of their wages, and ensure that passports were not confiscated and that employers violating that provision were punished. The Committee welcomed the news of the formal abolition of the sponsorship system through Act No. 21 of 2015 but was not convinced that all aspects of the system had in practice been removed. He would therefore be grateful for more information in that regard.

15. **Mr. Amir**, noting that Qatar endeavoured to serve peace and bring about rapprochement between conflicting parties, said that he wished to warmly welcome the delegation to the interactive dialogue with the Committee.

16. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would be grateful if the delegation could provide disaggregated data from the State party's most recent census showing the composition of the population, particularly national minorities and persons of African descent whose ancestors might have arrived in Qatar as a result of the trans-Saharan slave trade. He would also be grateful if the delegation would provide more information about reported cases of ill-treatment of and discrimination against non-nationals, such as the case of Mr. Tayeb Benabderrahmane, who had allegedly not enjoyed equality before the law and had been imprisoned then deported. He would appreciate receiving information about access to justice for non-nationals and the practical application of the principle enshrined in the Constitution of equality before the law, particularly for national minorities.

17. **A representative of Qatar** said that the laws in his country were aligned with the provisions of the Convention. His Government had ratified the Convention without reservation precisely because its provisions did not contradict any of the country's laws, including sharia. By contrast, Qatar had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with reservations, owing to the incompatibility of certain of its provisions with sharia. It was true that there was currently no clear definition of racial discrimination in Qatari legislation; his Government would initiate debates with multiple stakeholders with a view to adopting a law containing such a definition.

18. The National Human Rights Committee drafted its own budget proposal in line with its financial regulations. The proposal, once approved by the Committee's Chairperson, was submitted to the Council of Ministers and forwarded to the Minister of Finance for assessment. The Committee was then notified of the decision and had the right to contest it. The Committee had done so on the basis that a budget reduction contradicted the recommendation to strengthen the Committee's independence. Following a slight increase in 2019, the Government had been obliged to reduce the Committee's budget in 2020 and 2021 owing to the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. At that time, all institutional mechanisms in Qatar had faced budgetary restrictions; the Committee had been no exception.

19. The national action plan for human rights had been provisionally approved before the pandemic but, following changes in the Government in its wake, provisional approval had had to be given to a new national action plan. That plan had been submitted to the Council of Ministers and was currently awaiting adoption. Regarding training on the provisions of the Convention, an institute under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized yearly training courses for diplomats on the seven core international human right instruments that Qatar had ratified.

20. The term “person of African descent” was not used in Qatar. Descendants of persons trafficked as part of the slave trade had fully integrated into society and were not referred to as persons of African descent. No distinction was drawn between such persons and other Qataris. The Government condemned any form of ill-treatment committed in Qatar. Law enforcement agencies processed cases of ill-treatment regardless of the nationalities of the persons involved. He had never heard of the case involving a Mr. Tayeb Benabderrahmane and would be grateful if the Committee would provide more information about that case, in order to allow the delegation to respond more fully.

21. **A representative of Qatar** said that, under article 6 of the Constitution, the State must respect international instruments and must strive to incorporate them into national law. In accordance with article 68 of the Constitution, treaties and conventions, once ratified and published in the Official Gazette, had the force of law. The only provisions of the Convention that could not currently be fully implemented were those on punishment for offences, as Qatar had yet to adopt legislation outlining specific penalties for all offences. To his knowledge, no case in any civil or criminal court to date had invoked the provisions of the Convention.

22. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary had made considerable progress in the provision of both theoretical and practical training courses to judges, prosecutors and officers of the judiciary to ensure their improved understanding of international instruments, including the Convention. Those courses had covered human rights in the context of a number of areas, including artificial intelligence, online crime and criminal justice. In addition, the Supreme Council of the Judiciary endeavoured to deliver such training with due reference to the Judicial Code of Conduct.

23. Incitement to racial and religious hatred and all forms of racial discrimination had been criminalized, and the law provided for penalties for religious insults or the desecration of religious sites. Any person who produced materials insulting religion was subject to penalties by law. Under the Cybercrime Act and the Printing and Publications Act, insults based on origin, race or religion and incitement to racial hatred were both subject to penalties. Part of his Government’s approach to combating racial discrimination included the adoption of legislation that reinforced the pillars of society, namely justice, freedom, moral rectitude and equality. The principles of equality enshrined in the Constitution were reflected in the Alliance of Civilizations programme, which included initiatives promoting Islamic culture, which itself encouraged coexistence and cooperation between nations, respect for different cultures and acceptance of the other. In addition, the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue had been established in 2010 and the Global Youth Interfaith and Intercultural Forum had been held in Doha in February 2023.

24. Regarding access to justice, the National Human Rights Committee had received just one complaint about racial discrimination, which, after being referred to the competent authorities for review, had been found not to involve an offence of racial discrimination but rather a breach of residency law. Victims and witnesses of crimes were protected by law and therefore did not need to fear submitting a complaint or reporting a crime. Any person was entitled to submit a complaint, including through an electronic portal. That electronic portal could also be used to hold virtual court hearings, which witnesses and victims could attend online. Litigants therefore did not have to be present in Qatar to exercise their right to a hearing.

25. **A representative of Qatar** said that the legal and judicial training unit under the Ministry of Justice provided specialized human rights training for judges, lawyers, legal researchers and related personnel on all international instruments ratified by Qatar. The provisions of the Nationality Act remained unchanged. His Government had approved

legislation (Decree-Law No. 21 of 2020) granting associations more flexibility in relation to their registration procedures. A number of measures had been taken to facilitate the work of civil society organizations in Qatar.

26. **Mr. Guissé** said that he wished to hear more about how the State party would deal with any conflict that might arise between sharia and the provisions of the Convention. In addition, he asked whether the State party had taken any steps towards making the optional declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention recognizing the Committee's competence to receive and consider individual communications, as the Committee had encouraged the State party to do in its concluding observations on the State party's combined seventeenth to twenty-first periodic reports. Mindful of the fact that non-nationals comprised over 80 per cent of the population of Qatar, he would be grateful to receive more information about access to nationality. He would also appreciate more detailed information on the issues already touched on by the delegation, such as training. For instance, the delegation might share the number of lawyers and police officers who had received training.

27. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she wished to express her concern regarding the reservations made by the State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which could expose women, particularly those working as domestic workers, to intersectional discrimination. She wished to recall the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2000) on gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination and would be grateful if the delegation could clarify the State party's understanding of the issue.

28. **Ms. Tlakula** said that the Committee had been informed that a draft law on media activity prohibiting publications inciting hatred and hostility had been approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2018 but had not yet been adopted. She would be grateful if the delegation could clarify the status of that law.

29. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would be interested to learn more about the practicalities of hearings held via the electronic portal, including, for instance, how witnesses were contacted and evidence was presented. She wondered whether hearings could be held online for any offence or only certain types.

30. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that the Nationality Act contravened not only the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination but also the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which the State party had ratified. In that context, she would be grateful if the delegation would outline how the State party intended to reconcile such conflicts.

31. **Mr. Diaby** said that, unless it had access to disaggregated data on national minorities, the Committee would be unable to appreciate the efforts made by the State party since the previous interactive dialogue. He would be grateful to receive information about whether persons belonging to national minorities in Qatar enjoyed freedom of association. The case of a non-national's access to justice and right to a fair trial in Qatar to which he had referred earlier concerned a Franco-Algerian citizen working for the National Human Rights Committee who had reportedly been arrested in 2020 by police without a warrant, imprisoned and deported. He would gladly provide further information if required and would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on that case.

32. **A representative of Qatar** said that the national body for statistics, the Planning and Statistics Authority, had stated that it did not discriminate on the basis of race or religion and therefore could not disaggregate its population statistics by national minority. It did, however, possess data on nationals and non-nationals: they comprised 10 per cent and 90 per cent of the population, respectively. His Government had not taken steps towards holding discussions on whether to make the optional declaration provided in article 14 of the Convention.

33. **A representative of Qatar** said that he wished to reaffirm that human rights training for law enforcement officers was a high priority for the Ministry of the Interior, as it ensured that officers demonstrated respect for human rights in the performance of their duties, including treating nationals and non-nationals alike equally and without discrimination. The Ministry had collaborated with the National Human Rights Committee on the drafting of a

working document to regulate the conduct of police officers during the 2022 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and on the organization of a workshop on human rights protection mechanisms. In addition, his Government had issued a statement on the Arab Charter on Human Rights in observance of the Arab Human Rights Day.

34. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Public Prosecution Service represented the whole of society without any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or origin. The body accepted complaints submitted in person, in writing or online and made use of artificial intelligence tools, for example to help expedite litigation.

35. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Constitution prohibited discrimination on the basis of any grounds, including race, and stipulated that arrests were permitted only under the provisions of the law. Equality and non-discrimination formed the basis of all national legislation, rights and duties applied to all nationals and non-nationals alike, and acts such as racial discrimination were punishable by law.

36. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Judicial Authority Act No. 8 of 2023 provided that trials could be held electronically, allowing witnesses or victims to attend remotely at the request of the parties involved in proceedings when there were obstacles to in-person attendance. Under Act No. 5 of 2022 on the protection of victims, witnesses and the like, electronic hearings could involve the use of image-blurring tools in order to protect the identity of persons giving evidence in serious cases. Electronic trials were not mandatory but they helped to save time and effort and effectively served justice. They were implemented with the support of national and international partners specialized in electronic portal technology.

37. **A representative of Qatar** said that the country was under no obligation to grant nationality to certain groups of people. That was a sovereign issue, in which the Government was guided by the Nationality Act No. 38 of 2005. Nationality was conferred on the basis of *jus sanguinis*, with priority given to children of Qatari mothers. Under Qatari law, dual nationality was prohibited, and maintaining the demographic composition of the population was a priority.

38. Act No. 10 of 2018 concerning permanent residency gave priority in that area to children of Qatari mothers. Permanent residency brought with it a number of benefits in areas including property ownership, investment, housing and education.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.35 p.m. and resumed at 4.45 p.m.*

39. **Ms. Chung** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know why none of the complaints received by the National Human Rights Committee apparently related to racial discrimination. She would welcome information about the number and types of complaints of racial discrimination that had been submitted to other national institutions and the courts; the results of investigations conducted; any penalties imposed; and reparations granted to victims. It would be interesting to hear about any concrete examples of decisions in favour of victims of racial discrimination. She would like the delegation to describe any measures adopted to facilitate the reporting of racial discrimination, including steps to reverse the burden of proof in favour of victims; and any measures taken to raise awareness among the population, including migrant workers, of the rights enshrined in the Convention and the complaint mechanisms and judicial and non-judicial remedies available to them in the event that they experienced racial discrimination. She would like to learn about any actions taken to improve access to justice and ensure effective remedies and adequate and prompt reparation for victims of racial discrimination, in particular migrants, including the removal of barriers such as fear of reprisals and fear of deportation for absconding, and to prevent and address racist attitudes and discrimination in the judicial system and police.

40. She wondered what measures the State party had adopted to ensure that interpretation was provided in a language understood by the defendant during all stages of judicial proceedings, including criminal proceedings, and to review all cases in which interpretation had not been provided, with a view to releasing persons held without having benefited from due process. She would also like to know what action had been taken to ensure that authorities

working in places of detention met their obligations to provide detainees with access to consular assistance under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

41. She asked what steps the State party had taken to prevent racial profiling and racial discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, migrant workers and asylum-seekers by law enforcement officials through the use of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity measures. Information relating to reports of persons of South Asian and sub-Saharan African origin being denied access to public parks and shopping malls in Doha on account of their appearance would be appreciated.

42. She would welcome information about legislative and other measures taken to prevent, combat and explicitly prohibit racial profiling against groups more vulnerable to racial discrimination, mainly migrant workers, and persons facing intersecting forms of discrimination, such as that based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. She would like to learn more about the use of mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS, including disaggregated data on the nationality and ethnic origin of persons required to take the tests.

43. It would be helpful to know what human rights training was given to law enforcement officers, in particular in the areas of racial and ethnic profiling and cultural diversity, and how closely officers were supervised. She wondered whether health-care professionals received regular human rights training, including on racial bias, stereotypes and non-discrimination.

44. She would like the delegation to outline any measures the State party had taken to include human rights education, in particular education on the Convention and the fight against racial discrimination and racism, in school curricula and textbooks and in training programmes for teachers and other education professionals in public and private educational institutions. The creation of the Bin Jelmoody House was commendable, and information about any other initiatives to address the history and consequences of slavery in Qatar, including in school curricula and textbooks, would be welcome. She wondered whether any steps had been taken to promote knowledge and awareness of the cultural heritage and history of groups belonging to minorities, including non-nationals, and their contribution to the society and culture of Qatar.

45. She would like to know about any measures taken to prevent and combat the prevalence and dissemination of stereotypes, racial prejudice and xenophobia, particularly against non-nationals and migrant workers, notably South Asians and sub-Saharan Africans, including in the media and on social networks. Lastly, she wondered whether any measures had been adopted to engage with relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations and academia, on the promotion of understanding and tolerance and on the fight against racial discrimination.

46. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that the judicious use of electronic portal technology offered significant benefits in certain aspects of court cases, for example in order to exchange pleadings and process payments smoothly. However, he wished to caution against viewing it as a panacea. Live hearings had major advantages, and effectively rendering justice was not a question of expediting procedures.

47. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would like to hear an update on the work of the committee established in 2019 to remedy the lack of specific anti-discrimination safeguards for ethnic and religious minorities in the State party's 2019 National Artificial Intelligence Strategy. She would also like to know which agency investigated complaints of racial discrimination arising from the use of artificial intelligence and new technologies.

48. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know how many complaints had been received against police officers accused of racial profiling, whether there was an external system in place to combat discrimination of that kind and whether the Ministry of the Interior or the police had an internal oversight mechanism to manage the implementation of artificial intelligence in the light of concerns of racial profiling arising from its use.

49. **A representative of Qatar** said that no person was denied access to public spaces in Qatar on grounds of skin colour or ethnicity. Certain spaces were accessible to families only; no persons were allowed into such places unless entering as part of a family group including children, irrespective of nationality.



50. Wrongful acts committed by specific individuals, including law enforcement officials, should not be seen as a reflection of national legislation, under which violations of the rights of citizens of Qatar and non-citizens alike were considered to be criminal acts. Mechanisms were in place to prevent any kind of abuse or violation of the rights of individuals and to restore the rights of victims of such abuse.

51. **A representative of Qatar** said that the National Human Rights Committee had received only one complaint of racial discrimination. When reviewed, it transpired to relate to a breach of the country's residency regulations and was not a case of racial discrimination. No legal proceedings concerning racial discrimination or associated acts of hatred had been initiated, either by the Public Prosecution Service or by individuals.

52. Complaints could be lodged and legal proceedings brought by any person, irrespective of ethnic or religious group.

53. **A representative of Qatar** said that no distinction was made in the country's prisons between citizen and non-citizen inmates in terms of their accommodation, food, communications and visitation rights, including consular visitation rights. The issue of unannounced inspections of travellers suspected of carrying drugs needed to be viewed in the light of internal security concerns. All departments, including human rights or security departments, could receive complaints of human rights violations. All appropriate legal and security measures were taken in order to process any such complaints.

54. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Public Prosecution Service conducted its investigations in Arabic, and migrant workers under investigation could make use of the interpretation and translation department provided by the court system, which offered services in 80 languages, covering all of the languages spoken by migrant workers in Qatar. However, they were under no obligation to use its interpreters, and could instead select their own interpreter or one appointed by their country's consulate. With respect to arbitrary detention, individuals could be held in police custody for a maximum of 24 hours, after which they were referred to the Public Prosecution Service. If that body decided that an individual had committed no crime and that there was no reason to hold them, they would be released immediately.

55. **A representative of Qatar** said that medical examinations conducted on persons working in Qatar were compulsory for citizens and non-citizens alike.

56. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Ministry of Public Health had a mandate to protect public health and had adopted a methodological and scientific approach to disease detection and prevention in the country. HIV was one of a number of chronic and communicable diseases for which the entire population of citizens and non-citizens had been tested since 2011. Migrant workers were required to undergo a mandatory medical examination in order to obtain their residence and work permits; their families and persons seeking to enter the country on student visas were similarly subject to medical testing.

57. **A representative of Qatar** said that the national educational framework was premised on the need to promote tolerance and dialogue, to combat hatred, to reject violence and extremism, and to foster people's ability to coexist in a sound and constructive manner. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education disseminated information about human rights principles in educational institutions, and a human rights guide had been launched for all levels of education. Other government efforts to raise awareness of human rights issues among students, teachers and parents included workshops, symposiums and interactive activities designed to deepen understanding of the subject. Teachers received training in educational values covering a wide range of human rights and aimed at fostering respect, acceptance of the other and the right of peoples to self-determination, freedom of belief and freedom to exercise religious rituals. International conferences, information campaigns and arts exhibitions built around human rights-based themes were organized in the country. Qatar also provided postgraduate programmes in the area of human rights. For example, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies taught a postgraduate degree in human rights and the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Centre taught a master's degree in the same area, in partnership with the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom.

58. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Ministry of Justice promoted awareness-raising in the area of human rights under the provisions of Decision No. 57 of 2021. The Ministry's Legal and Judicial Studies Center offered training courses in that field for judges, lawyers, specialists and legal researchers and had set up a Legal Awareness Unit.

59. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology was tasked with managing issues related to artificial intelligence and its human rights implications. A week-long symposium on that topic, with a special focus on non-discrimination, had been attended by governmental and non-governmental authorities, as well as by representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

60. **Ms. Chung** said that she would like to know whether the country's human rights education programmes covered the negative stereotyping of persons of Asian and African origin. She would also welcome information about any steps taken to act on concerns expressed in the 2022 annual report of the National Human Rights Committee that legislation covering issues such as terrorism and state security allowed infringements of civil and political rights to take place which apparently disproportionately affected non-nationals.

61. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that the Committee had concerns about the legitimacy of mandatory medical examinations, including HIV testing, on public health grounds and the fact that they interfered disproportionately with the right to autonomy, informed consent and privacy. Mandatory testing of migrant workers also ran the risk of reinforcing stereotypes, especially given that non-nationals tended to work in specific sectors of the economy. She therefore wished to learn more about the State party's views on mandatory testing procedures, and she would like the delegation to clarify whether mandatory HIV tests applied to all workers in Qatar or only to migrant workers.

62. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she wished to commend the State party for putting into practice one of the recommendations for implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, by memorializing the victims of the historic trafficking of enslaved Africans, and to encourage it to support the call for a second international decade for people of African descent. She looked forward to learning the findings of the committee set up to establish anti-discrimination safeguards applicable to the use of artificial intelligence.

63. **Ms. Esseneme** said that the requirement for migrants to undergo HIV testing in order to enter Qatar contravened the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, which prohibited compulsory examinations of that kind. Migrants were apparently also subjected to further testing once inside the country in order to qualify for employment there. She wondered whether any Qatari nationals, who made up only 10 per cent of the country's population, were living with HIV. She also wished to know what the national strategy was for combating HIV, in order to prevent infection in the first place and also to treat those who had contracted the virus.

64. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would like to know whether the National Human Rights Committee had received any complaints on racial discrimination arising from the use of artificial intelligence.

65. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would like to know more about the situation of non-nationals in the context of virtual hearings, whether they could gain access to legal aid when proceedings took place online, and whether legal aid was provided free of charge. He also wished to know whether the State party had initiated inquiries into racial insults directed at a member of the New Zealand national football team by one of his opponents in a match played against Qatar in 2023, whether the country's legislation contained provisions to prevent or punish racism in sport, and whether the Qatar Football Federation had taken measures following the episode in question.

66. **A representative of Qatar** said that the country's compulsory medical testing policy was a procedure of the Ministry of Public Health designed to combat communicable diseases and was not discriminatory. It applied to all individuals, Qataris and non-Qataris alike.

67. The Qatar Football Federation had issued a statement on the incident that had occurred in the football match against New Zealand. The Qatar Olympic Committee worked with the Ministry of Sports and Youth to provide human rights training courses. Law enforcement

officers were trained to manage spectators at sports events, they were aware of human rights and crowd management techniques, and they had been provided with guidelines designed to help prevent discrimination in sporting venues.

68. **A representative of Qatar** said that in-person court hearings were the norm in Qatar. By introducing virtual hearings, justice had been made more widely accessible, because they permitted the involvement of parties unable to appear in court in person. Litigants were free to choose between the in-person and online format. Virtual hearings, including criminal proceedings, involved no costs for the litigants. A small fee was charged only in certain commercial law proceedings. No distinction was drawn between nationalities in court proceedings, and full impartiality applied.

69. **A representative of Qatar** said that the Public Prosecution Service received any complaints lodged against the police and other law enforcement agencies. Such complaints had led to rulings being handed down by the Supreme Judicial Council. The Public Prosecution Service also paid unannounced visits to places of deprivation of liberty and police stations, in order to ensure that human rights were not being abused.

70. **A representative of Qatar** said that the law enforcement officers involved in the unlawful acts perpetrated on Australian nationals at Hamad International Airport had been taken to court. The leaders of Qatar and Australia had spoken by telephone and an official apology had been issued. Law enforcement officers, particularly those working in public places like the airport, received human rights training.

71. **A representative of Qatar** said that the country's human rights training included a focus on cultural differences but did not make specific reference to persons of African descent because the Government did not use that term.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*