



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
6 May 2024

Original: English

Human Rights Committee

Concluding observations on the initial report of Somalia*

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Somalia¹ at its 4083rd and 4084th meetings,² held on 7 and 8 March 2024. At its 4105th meeting, held on 22 March 2024, it adopted the present concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee is grateful to the State party for having accepted the simplified reporting procedure and for submitting its initial report in response to the list of issues prior to reporting prepared under that procedure.³ It expresses appreciation for the opportunity to initiate its constructive dialogue with the State party's delegation on the measures taken during the reporting period to implement the provisions of the Covenant. The Committee thanks the State party for the oral responses provided by the delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the following legislative and policy measures taken by the State party:

- (a) The enactment of the National Human Rights Commission Law, in 2016;
- (b) The enactment of the National Disability Agency Law, in 2018;
- (c) The adoption of the action plan to end the recruitment and use of children as soldiers and the action plan to end the killing and maiming of children, in 2012;
- (d) The establishment of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, in 2013;
- (e) The adoption of the National Action Plan on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, in 2014;
- (f) The adoption of the Human Rights Road Map, in 2013, and the Joint Human Rights Programme, in 2018;
- (g) The adoption of the National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, in 2019;
- (h) The adoption of the National Eviction Guidelines and the Interim Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, in 2019;

* Adopted by the Committee at its 140th session (4–28 March 2024).

¹ [CCPR/C/SOM/1](#).

² See [CCPR/C/SR.4083](#) and [CCPR/C/SR.4084](#).

³ [CCPR/C/SOM/QPR/1](#).



- (i) The establishment of the Interministerial Human Rights Coordination Unit, in 2017;
 - (j) The establishment of the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2020;
 - (k) The establishment of the Judicial Training Institute, in 2021.
4. The Committee also welcomes the ratification of, or accession to, the following international instruments by the State party:
- (a) The Convention on the Rights of the Child, on 1 October 2015;
 - (b) The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on 6 August 2019;
 - (c) The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), on 26 November 2019;
 - (d) The United Nations Convention against Corruption, on 11 August 2021.

C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

Constitutional and legal framework within which the Covenant is implemented

5. Noting that the State party's Provisional Constitution (2012) does not clarify the status of international human rights treaties, including the Covenant, in the domestic legal order, and that the Covenant rights are enshrined in the Bill of Rights, which forms part of the Provisional Constitution, the Committee is concerned that sharia law is the supreme law in the country and may prevail over the Covenant in case of conflicting provisions. The Committee is further concerned that, despite training efforts, many judges, lawyers, prosecutors and law enforcement officials reportedly lack adequate knowledge and skills to effectively apply the provisions of the Covenant and the first Optional Protocol thereto. The Committee is also deeply concerned about violations of Covenant rights in the areas under the control of Al-Shabaab (art. 2).

6. The State party should give full legal effect to the Covenant in its domestic legal order and ensure that domestic laws, including those based on sharia law, are interpreted and applied in ways that are compatible with its obligations under the Covenant. Furthermore, the State party should take further measures to raise awareness of the Covenant and the first Optional Protocol thereto among judges, lawyers, prosecutors and law enforcement officials, and the general public, in order to ensure that the provisions of these instruments are invoked, taken into account and applied by the national courts. The State party should continue its efforts to ensure that its obligations under the Covenant are fulfilled throughout the national territory, taking all necessary measures in conformity with international law.

National human rights institution

7. The Committee is concerned that in spite of the progress made towards the creation of a national human rights institution, the National Human Rights Commission has not yet been established (art. 2).

8. The State party should expeditiously finalize the establishment of a national human rights institution with a broad mandate, in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), and ensure the institution's ability to carry out its mandate effectively and independently.

Anti-corruption measures

9. While noting the State party's efforts to tackle corruption, including through the adoption of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020–2023) and the Law Establishing the Anti-Corruption Commission (2016), the Committee is concerned that anti-corruption efforts have been hampered by the absence of a higher judicial council and an anti-corruption commission, and that corruption remains prevalent in the country (arts. 2 and 25).

10. **The State party should speed up the process of establishing the Higher Judicial Council and reinstating the Anti-Corruption Commission and continue its efforts to investigate allegations of corruption promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially, to duly try and punish those responsible and, if those responsible are convicted, impose penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence, and provide victims with full reparations.**

Combating impunity, and past human rights violations

11. While noting the efforts of the State party towards reconciliation and peacebuilding, the Committee is concerned that accountability for past serious human rights violations has not yet been fully recognized. It is also concerned that a national truth and reconciliation commission has not yet been created. It is further concerned about the implications that the amnesty bill will have on efforts to combat impunity (arts. 2, 6, 7 and 17).

12. **The State party should:**

(a) **Investigate allegations of past serious human rights violations, prosecute the perpetrators and, if they are convicted, impose appropriate penalties, and ensure access to effective remedies for victims;**

(b) **Step up its efforts to establish a national truth and reconciliation commission;**

(c) **Ensure the conformity of the amnesty bill with the Covenant, taking into account the need to combat impunity.**

Non-discrimination and equality between men and women

13. While noting that the enjoyment of equal rights and equal protection before the law is stipulated in the Provisional Constitution, the Committee is concerned that the State party has not adopted comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination. It is concerned about numerous allegations of discrimination on the grounds prohibited by the Covenant, including age, ethnicity, gender, disability, HIV/AIDS status, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is further concerned about reports of discrimination against women as regards their participation in public life, their access to justice, health care, education and employment and the lack of protection against violence afforded to them. It is particularly concerned that the Penal Code criminalizes consenting sexual relations between adults of the same sex and that certain Islamic “courts” subject to the control of insurgents have allegedly imposed the death penalty for consensual same-sex sexual relations based on sharia law (arts. 2, 3, 23, 25 and 26).

14. **The State party should adopt comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination, including intersectional, direct and indirect discrimination, in all spheres of life, in both the public and the private sectors and on all grounds prohibited under the Covenant, including age, ethnicity, gender, disability, HIV/AIDS status, sexual orientation and gender identity. It should:**

(a) **Review the relevant legislative framework with a view to guaranteeing that all persons can fully enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Covenant, including through the decriminalization of sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex;**

(b) **Take effective measures to combat stereotypes and biases towards women, persons with disabilities and persons with HIV/AIDS and to combat negative attitudes towards persons based on sexual orientation in legislation, public policies and programmes;**

(c) **Adopt specific measures to prevent acts of discrimination, including by providing training and awareness-raising programmes for civil servants, law enforcement officials, the judiciary and public prosecutors, as well as for religious and community leaders and the general public;**

(d) **Take active measures to promote the participation of women and other marginalized groups in all spheres of life, including the political and economic spheres,**

including through the implementation of the national action plan on women, peace and security in response to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Harmful traditional practices

15. While noting the prohibition of female genital mutilation in the Provisional Constitution and the State party's efforts to combat it, the Committee is gravely concerned that the prevalence rate of female genital mutilation has reportedly risen to 99 per cent in the State party, and that a bill to amend the law on female genital mutilation represents a regression relative to previous legislation, in part because it prohibits only one form of female genital mutilation. The Committee is equally concerned about the high rates of early and forced marriage, with some Somali girls marrying even before the age of 15. The Committee expresses its concern about the practice of polygamy, which is still permitted through religious or customary norms and widely accepted in society (arts. 2, 3, 6, 7 and 26).

16. The State party should:

(a) **Ensure that its national legislation prohibits all harmful traditional practices, including all forms of female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage, and complement such legislation with comprehensive policies, community-based programmes and public education that address the root causes of these practices and involve community, religious and traditional leaders;**

(b) **Adopt measures aimed at ending polygamy, including through outreach and awareness-raising;**

(c) **Ensure that all cases involving the performance of harmful traditional practices are investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with commensurate sanctions, and that victims are provided with effective remedies and redress, health-care services, mental health and psychosocial support, legal assistance, and socioeconomic reintegration services.**

Violence against women and sexual violence

17. The Committee is deeply concerned about reports of violence against women and sexual violence, including conflict-related violence; such violence includes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls and boys. While noting the legislative efforts of the State party to combat sexual violence, it is concerned that the bill on sexual intercourse and related crimes does not provide for substantive protection to victims of sexual violence and allows for child marriage (arts. 2, 3, 6, 7 and 26).

18. The State party should:

(a) **Ensure that its national legislation prohibits and punishes all forms of violence against women, sexual violence and child marriage and provides for substantive protection to victims, in accordance with the Covenant;**

(b) **Promptly and thoroughly investigate all allegations of violence against women and sexual violence by State officials and members of terrorist groups, prosecute perpetrators and, if they are convicted, punish them with appropriate penalties, and provide victims of violence against women and sexual violence with access to remedies and redress;**

(c) **Establish an effective mechanism to facilitate and encourage victims of violence against women and sexual violence to report cases to the police, and raise awareness about the criminal nature of such acts in order to address underreporting;**

(d) **Allocate resources to expand the network of shelters and other support services, to establish specialized units for women at police stations and hospitals all over the country, and to train officials on how to handle cases of violence against women and sexual violence.**

Maternal and infant mortality and voluntary termination of pregnancy

19. The Committee is deeply concerned about the very high rates of maternal and infant mortality in the country. The Committee is also concerned that article 15 (5) of the Provisional Constitution prohibits abortion except in cases of necessity, especially to save the life of the mother, and that the Penal Code criminalizes abortion, except to save the life of the mother. It is also concerned about reports that the proposed new Constitution retains the provision on prohibiting abortion except in cases of necessity and introduces more administrative obstacles for women who are legally entitled to an abortion (arts. 3, 6 and 7).

20. **The State party should:**

(a) **Strengthen non-discriminatory access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, with the aim of substantially lowering maternal and infant mortality rates;**

(b) **Consider reviewing its legislation, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life, with a view to guaranteeing safe, legal and effective access to abortion, not only where the life or health of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, but also where carrying a pregnancy to term would cause the pregnant woman or girl substantial pain or suffering, most notably where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or where the pregnancy is not viable;**

(c) **Facilitate access for women, men, girls and boys to evidence-based information and education about sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to a wide range of affordable contraceptive methods.**

Death penalty

21. The Committee is deeply concerned about the continued use of the death penalty, which can be imposed for offences that do not meet the threshold of "the most serious crimes" within the meaning of article 6 (2) of the Covenant, understood to be crimes involving intentional killing. It is further concerned about reports that the death penalty can be imposed on persons under 18 years of age and that it can be imposed on civilians by military tribunals. It is deeply concerned about allegations that, in regions controlled by Al-Shabaab, de facto authorities carry out executions for crimes such as adultery and consensual same-sex sexual relations (art. 6).

22. **Bearing in mind the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018), the State party should:**

(a) **Take all measures necessary, including legislative action, to ensure that the death penalty is applied only for the most serious crimes involving intentional killing and is never imposed in violation of the Covenant, including in violation of fair trial procedures or on persons under 18 years of age;**

(b) **Take all measures available to prevent executions in the regions controlled by Al-Shabaab;**

(c) **Consider introducing a moratorium on the death penalty and commuting all death sentences to terms of imprisonment;**

(d) **Give due consideration to abolishing the death penalty, to acceding to the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, and to implementing awareness-raising measures to increase public support for the abolition of the death penalty.**

Right to life, protection of civilians and excessive use of force

23. The Committee is gravely concerned by reports, and many specific incidents, of excessive use of force and killing of civilians by members of the armed forces, law enforcement, and Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups. The Committee is also concerned about the compatibility of the State party's laws on the use of force and firearms with international standards and the application, in practice, of articles 32 and 33 of the Code of

Military Criminal Law, which allows for exceptions to the prosecution of law enforcement officers (arts. 3, 6 and 7).

24. The State party should take additional measures to effectively prevent and punish the killing of civilians and the excessive use of force by members of the armed forces, law enforcement, and Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups. It should:

(a) **Ensure that all legislative and regulatory provisions governing the use of force are in line with the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018), which establish a requirement that law enforcement officers use lethal force only when strictly necessary in order to protect life or prevent serious injury from an imminent threat;**

(b) **Introduce procedures to guarantee that law enforcement operations are properly planned and conducted in order to minimize the risks to human life;**

(c) **Ensure that all reports of the excessive use of force by members of law enforcement, the armed forces, Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups are investigated promptly, effectively and impartially, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions, and that redress and compensation are provided to victims of such violations;**

(d) **Ensure that all law enforcement officers systematically receive training on the above-mentioned international standards and that the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality are strictly adhered to in practice.**

Counter-terrorism measures

25. The Committee is concerned that the legal framework governing counter-terrorism efforts does not provide adequate safeguards to ensure full respect of the rights guaranteed under the Covenant, including owing to the broad powers vested in the National Security Intelligence Agency. The Committee is also very concerned about allegations of torture and other serious human rights violations in the context of the State party's counter-terrorism operations, including in secret detention centres operated by the National Security Intelligence Agency (arts. 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 14 and 19).

26. The State party should take steps to ensure that counter-terrorism legislation and counter-piracy measures are not used to unjustifiably limit any rights enshrined in the Covenant, including the rights to life, liberty and security of person, privacy, freedom of association and freedom of expression. It should further take appropriate measures to investigate human rights violations in counter-terrorism operations, and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions and that victims have access to effective remedies. It should immediately end the practice of secret detentions.

Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

27. While noting that torture is prohibited by the Provisional Constitution and that the Penal Code is under review, the Committee is concerned about the absence of a specific crime of torture in the State party's criminal legislation. It is gravely concerned about numerous allegations of torture and ill-treatment and regrets the absence of data concerning complaints, prosecutions of alleged perpetrators of such acts and other similar acts containing elements of torture, related convictions and punishments, and the redress provided to victims. The Committee welcomes the statement by the delegation that the State party will consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in order to prevent torture and ill-treatment (arts. 6 and 7).

28. The State party should urgently take the measures necessary to eradicate torture and ill-treatment. In particular, the State party should:

(a) Amend the Penal Code to establish a specific crime of torture, in accordance with the internationally accepted human rights definition of torture, with sanctions that are commensurate with the gravity of such offences;

(b) Conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment and deaths in custody in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) and the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death, prosecute perpetrators and, if they are convicted, punish them with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of the crime, provide victims with full remedy and redress, and collect relevant data on complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions and remedy to victims;

(c) Take all measures necessary to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including by strengthening the human rights training provided to judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials, including on the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information-Gathering (the Méndez Principles);

(d) Ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty have access to an independent and effective complaints mechanism for the investigation of allegations of torture and ill-treatment;

(e) Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

Treatment of persons deprived of their liberty and conditions of detention

29. The Committee is concerned that the conditions in prisons and other places of deprivation of liberty are below internationally recognized standards as a result of overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions and a lack of access to health care and to inadequate food and water (arts. 6, 7 and 10).

30. **The State party should intensify its efforts to ensure that conditions of detention fully comply with relevant international human rights standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). In particular, the State party should:**

(a) **Reduce prison overcrowding, improve detention conditions and ensure adequate access to food, water and health care for prisoners in all places of deprivation of liberty;**

(b) **Ensure the regular and unhindered monitoring of all places of deprivation of liberty by an independent monitoring and oversight mechanism, without prior notice and on an unsupervised basis, in order to prevent torture and ill-treatment.**

Administration of justice

31. The Committee is concerned that the formal justice system faces many challenges, most notably a lack of human and financial resources. It is further concerned by the absence of a law setting out the structure and jurisdiction of the judiciary and a law on the provision of legal aid, and that the Judicial Service Commission has yet to be established. It is also concerned that traditional justice systems, such as alternative dispute resolution centres, play a key role in the adjudication of disputes but do not always adhere to the standards required by the Covenant, including with respect to the rights of minorities and marginalized groups. The Committee is further concerned that military courts exercise jurisdiction over civilians, including in terrorism-related crimes (art. 14).

32. **The State party should continue its efforts and take all measures necessary to reform the justice system and ensure that all court proceedings are conducted in full observance of the due process guarantees set forth in article 14 of the Covenant and**

bearing in mind the Committee's general comment No. 32 (2007) on the right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial. In so doing, it should:

(a) **Adopt legislation setting out the structure and jurisdiction of the judiciary and a law on the provision of legal aid, and finalize the establishment of the Judicial Service Commission;**

(b) **Ensure the full independence of judges and the autonomy of prosecutors, establish clear rules on their appointment, career and removal, in line with international standards, and ensure that traditional justice systems comply with the standards required by the Covenant;**

(c) **Remove, without further delay, the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians.**

Persons with disabilities

33. While commending the efforts of the State party to transpose the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into national law through the disability bill, the Committee is concerned that the transposition is only partial. It is also concerned about the reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities in all aspects of life and the prevailing stigmatization and prejudice, which contributes to the exclusion of persons with disabilities from Somali society (arts. 2, 7, 9, 10 and 26).

34. **The State party should strengthen its efforts to fully transpose the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into national legislation and take measures to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities in all spheres of life, including direct and indirect discrimination, and especially to address stigmatization of and prejudice towards persons with disabilities through education and awareness-raising, in order to facilitate the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.**

Refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons

35. While welcoming efforts by the State party to develop national institutions, laws and policies to address the humanitarian challenges related to the high number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons in Somalia, the Committee is concerned about the many security, political and economic challenges faced in implementing the National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons and the National Eviction Guidelines to prevent internal displacement, and in transposing the Kampala Convention into national law. It is also concerned that the Citizenship Law does not ensure that Somali mothers can transfer their nationality to their children on an equal footing with Somali fathers (arts. 7, 12, 13, 16 and 26).

36. **The State party should:**

(a) **Enhance efforts to implement the National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons and the National Eviction Guidelines;**

(b) **Develop an appropriate legal framework to support the transposition of the Kampala Convention into national law;**

(c) **Review and amend the Citizenship Act to ensure that Somali mothers can transfer their nationality on an equal footing with Somali fathers.**

Freedom of expression and the protection of journalists

37. The Committee is seriously concerned by numerous reports of severe restrictions on the freedoms of opinion and expression in the State party, including as a result of the legal framework that allows for limitations if activities are deemed to be contrary to Islam, public safety, public order or stability. The Committee is also concerned that the Media Law (2016) and the 2020 amendments thereto do not sufficiently safeguard freedom of expression and potentially criminalize reporting, thereby creating a chilling effect and leading to the self-censorship of journalists and human rights defenders. The Committee is gravely concerned about allegations of police brutality against, and harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrests and even killings of, human rights defenders, media workers and journalists,

including an alarming number of attacks against women journalists, by State actors and Al-Shabaab forces (arts. 6, 7, 18 and 19).

38. **In accordance with article 19 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression, the State party should:**

(a) **Take immediate steps to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to freedom of expression without interference and that any restrictions on the exercise of that right are in conformity with the strict requirements of article 19 (3) of the Covenant;**

(b) **Amend the Media Law to eliminate criminal penalties for journalists exercising their rights under the Covenant;**

(c) **Effectively prevent and combat acts of harassment, intimidation and violence against journalists, media workers and human rights defenders to ensure that they are free to carry out their work without fear of violence or reprisals;**

(d) **Conduct prompt, effective and impartial investigations into allegations of threats or violence against journalists, media workers and human rights defenders, bring the perpetrators to justice and, if they are convicted, punish them with commensurate sanctions, and provide victims with effective remedies.**

Right of peaceful assembly

39. Although the right of peaceful assembly is provided for in the Provisional Constitution of the State party, the Committee is deeply concerned about reports of numerous incidents of peaceful protesters being shot, killed, beaten, arrested and harassed by members of the State party's security forces, and regrets the lack of information provided on investigations of these incidents, the prosecution of perpetrators and the redress afforded to victims by the State party (arts. 6, 7 and 21).

40. **In accordance with article 21 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly, the State party should foster an enabling environment for the exercise of the right of peaceful assembly and ensure that limitations on that right are in strict compliance with article 21 of the Covenant and the principles of proportionality and necessity. It should avoid using military force to control protests and ensure that all allegations of excessive use of force by State agents are recorded and investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially, that those responsible are prosecuted according to their level of responsibility and, if found guilty, are punished with commensurate sanctions, and that the victims obtain redress.**

Right to freedom of conscience and religious belief

41. The Committee is concerned that the State party's Provisional Constitution prohibits the propagation of any religion other than Islam. It is concerned about allegations that changing one's religion is criminally punishable in practice, including on the basis of article 313 of the Penal Code. It is further concerned about reports of judicial harassment of religious minorities, impunity for perpetrators of violence and killing committed as a punishment for religious conversion, and cases of discrimination against non-Muslims, including in school settings and as regards manifestation of their religion (art. 18).

42. **The State party should guarantee the legal protection and effective exercise of freedom of religion and belief and refrain from any action that may restrict that freedom beyond the narrowly construed restrictions permitted under article 18 (3) of the Covenant. The State party should take specific measures to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against religious minorities, including the following:**

(a) **Ensure the freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief without being penalized;**

(b) **Decriminalize blasphemy and the propagation of religions other than Islam, repeal or amend the relevant provisions of the Provisional Constitution and the Penal Code, and immediately release those imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief and provide them with adequate compensation;**

(c) **Ensure effective protection of individuals accused of apostasy or blasphemy from violence, discrimination and any other human rights violations, and safeguard access to effective remedy and just satisfaction.**

Rights of the child

43. The Committee is concerned about proposed changes to the Provisional Constitution to lower the age of majority from 18 to 15 years or to attainment of puberty. The Committee is concerned about reports that children are exposed to violence, abductions, labour and forced recruitment as child soldiers, and that girls, in particular, are subjected to exploitation and deprived of schooling (arts. 7, 23, 24 and 26).

44. **The State party should:**

(a) **Maintain the age of majority for both boys and girls at 18 years, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards;**

(b) **Take all measures necessary to protect children from violence, abductions, labour and exploitation, and ensure redress and reintegration for victims of such abuses, as well as equal access to schooling for all children;**

(c) **Prevent, detect and eradicate the recruitment and use of child soldiers, ensure their prompt disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration, and reunite them with their families, while respecting the principle of the best interests of the child.**

Participation in public affairs

45. While the Committee notes the enactment of the Political Parties Law (2016), it is concerned that the political landscape is influenced by the major clans. While commending the 2020/2021 Election Agreement for incorporating a 30 per cent quota for women's representation, the Committee is concerned that this measure has not been fulfilled in practice, reportedly due to discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes (arts. 2, 25 and 26).

46. **The State party should take the measures necessary to ensure that its electoral regulations and practices are in full compliance with the Covenant, in particular article 25 thereof, and take into account the guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. It should ensure the full and effective enjoyment of the right of political participation by all citizens, including through effective enforcement of the 2020/2021 Election Agreement and further promote the equal participation of women, minorities and marginalized groups. The State party should also promote the civic education of boys and girls in schools, particularly in regions over which it has regained control, in order to foster political engagement and contribute to the country's future development.**

D. Dissemination and follow-up

47. **The State party should widely disseminate the Covenant, the first Optional Protocol thereto, its initial report and the present concluding observations, with a view to raising awareness of the rights enshrined in the Covenant among the judicial, legislative and administrative authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country, and the general public. The State party should ensure that the report and the present concluding observations are translated into the official languages of the State party.**

48. **In accordance with rule 75 (1) of the Committee's rules of procedure, the State party is requested to provide, by 29 March 2027, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in paragraphs 24 (right to life, protection of civilians and excessive use of force), 31 (administration of justice) and 44 (rights of the child) above.**

49. In line with the Committee's predictable review cycle, the State party will receive in 2030 the Committee's list of issues prior to the submission of the report and will be expected to submit within one year its replies, which will constitute its second periodic report. The Committee also requests the State party, in preparing the report, to broadly consult civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. The next constructive dialogue with the State party will take place in Geneva in 2032.
