



Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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Chair: Mr. Heller

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention (continued)

Eighth periodic report of Finland (continued) (CAT/C/FIN/8; CAT/C/FIN/QPR/8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Finland joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation of Finland to continue replying to the questions posed by Committee members at the previous meeting.
3. **A representative of Finland** said that the Parliamentary Ombudsman had been tasked with conducting inspections of closed institutions long before it had been designated as the national preventive mechanism and had therefore already been in receipt of sufficient resources for such activities. Parliament was responsible for allocating annual funding to the Ombudsman, and the Government had no influence over the level of financial or human resources provided to it, nor over its internal structure.
4. The Convention was directly applicable in the autonomous region of Åland in the same way as in the rest of Finland. The Parliamentary Ombudsman monitored the implementation of fundamental human rights by the authorities and private parties in Åland, while the Ombudsman of Åland promoted equality, non-discrimination and the rights of children, patients and consumers. The Sami Parliament did not have its own Ombudsman.
5. The Supreme Administrative Court had made reference to the Convention in matters concerning asylum. Finnish case law contained many references to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) and to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, which covered a number of key issues related to the scope of application of the Convention against Torture.
6. The report on the visit to Finland by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence would be submitted to the Human Rights Council later in 2024. The Government was committed to supporting the rights of the Sami people to enable them to maintain and develop their languages and culture and planned to invest in outreach activities for Sami youth to promote their social inclusion. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission concerning the Sami People would continue its work until 2025. The Prime Minister, who had emphasized that there was no room for racism in Finland, intended to lead an annual round-table discussion, the first of which had already been held, on promoting equality and non-discrimination, and an anti-racism campaign was planned that would focus on the areas of employment, sport and culture.
7. Finland strongly supported the United Nations human rights system and was seriously concerned about the drastic underfunding of the treaty bodies, which were its cornerstone. Her Government would continue to make unearmarked voluntary contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to call upon Member States to ensure sufficient funding for the Office in the regular budget of the United Nations.
8. **A representative of Finland** said that, pursuant to section 94 (3) of the Constitution, the Government had an obligation to engage in international cooperation for peace and development. Although that provision prevented Parliament from undertaking any obligation that would endanger the fundamental constitutional characteristics of a democratic society, it had never been applied in a way that would have prevented the State from accepting an international obligation. According to the Parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee, human rights were inseparable from the minimum standard for basic domestic rights. The Constitution and international human rights obligations were given primacy over domestic legislation. For example, in a case heard in early 2024, the Finnish Supreme Court had considered that the imposition of coercive measures would conflict with section 7 of the Constitution when interpreted in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. The obligation to assess the compatibility of government proposals with constitutional rights and international human rights obligations was a standard part of the legislative process.

9. Under the Criminal Code, there was no statute of limitations for crimes against humanity or war crimes, which could include torture-related offences. Torture constituted an international offence that invoked universal jurisdiction. Section 7 of the Constitution covered torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, albeit expressed in different terms from those used in the Convention. The Criminal Code covered torture, inhuman treatment and other grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and of article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

10. The Non-Discrimination Act prohibited discrimination on the grounds of language and origin, which included Sami languages and origin. The authorities used the Sami Barometer to assess the linguistic climate in the country and the effectiveness of services provided in Sami languages. Respondents' experiences varied greatly depending on whether they lived in the Sami homeland or in other parts of Finland. Participants in seminars organized by Nordic countries had agreed that there was a need to address hate speech and racism targeting the Sami people. Although Finland was a bilingual country, with both Finnish and Swedish as its national languages, one fifth of Finnish speakers reported having experienced harassment owing to the language they spoke. Measures to improve the language climate and create a positive perception of linguistic diversity had been included in the Strategy for the National Languages of Finland.

11. **A representative of Finland** said that, although members of the Defence Forces did not receive specific training on the Convention, conscripts and public officials were given training on international humanitarian law, the use of force and the law of armed conflict. Any member of the Defence Forces who used force was required to report his or her actions to a superior official.

12. **A representative of Finland** said that, in cases involving domestic violence, the Aliens Act made provision for the issuance of a residence permit to the victim if that person had close ties to Finland or was faced with particularly difficult circumstances that made it unreasonable to refuse such a permit. The Immigration Service had guidelines on how to apply the corresponding regulations in practice. Evidence such as a statement from social services or a doctor was accepted as sufficient proof of a person's situation. Other factors were also taken into account in the decision-making process, including the conditions the person might face if returned to his or her country of origin. Appeals brought before the Supreme Administrative Court in connection with such cases were given very careful consideration.

13. The legal provisions governing the enforcement of decisions relating to migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees were complex. Under the Aliens Act, a third-country national could appeal against the refusal of a residence permit but might be returned to his or her country of origin if the relevant court did not prevent the enforcement of the initial refusal decision. In cases involving the denial of asylum, the decision could not be enforced until it had been rendered final. No provision was made for voluntary return for applicants who were considered to be a danger to public order or security because, for example, they had committed a serious offence; in those cases, as well, the decision could be appealed but could be enforced unless the courts took steps to block enforcement. In some cases, applicants who repeatedly committed petty offences might exceed the threshold below which voluntary return was offered. In the case of entry bans, no period of voluntary return was granted.

14. In the consideration of asylum applications submitted after an initial application had been rejected, the Immigration Service took into account new information and any changes that had occurred since the submission of the initial application. If, at the registration stage, insufficient information had been collected to enable a decision on admissibility to be made, the Service might invite the applicant to an interview. In cases involving subsequent applications, the lodging of an appeal did not prevent the enforcement of a previous final rejection decision.

15. All applicants for international protection were entitled to legal aid throughout the asylum process. The proposed amendment to the Aliens Act was part of a package of legislative proposals aimed at further aligning asylum policy with relevant European Union directives, which were in keeping with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international human rights norms. The proposed amendment did not violate the

principle of non-refoulement and would be carefully examined by the Constitutional Law Committee of Parliament. Furthermore, if international protection was denied or discontinued, the person would not be removed from Finland if the return of that person would violate the principle of non-refoulement; in such cases, a temporary residence permit would be granted instead.

16. Lastly, Finland did not consider itself to have a mandate to monitor the situation of persons who had been removed from Finland to another country. Nevertheless, reintegration support was available for voluntary returnees through the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) or the International Organization for Migration.

17. **A representative of Finland**, recalling that Finland had closed its crossing points on the border with the Russian Federation in response to the exceptional situation of instrumentalized entry by third-country nationals, said that not only was Finland actively advocating solutions to counter the threat of instrumentalized entry at the European Union level, but it was also seeking solutions at the national level to ensure that the authorities had sufficient powers to safeguard national security. As the Government must be prepared for the possibility that the Russian Federation would exert prolonged pressure on Finland and employ instrumentalized entry techniques on a larger scale, a bill was being developed to ensure preparedness and safeguard the authorities' ability to take action in the most serious situations. It was not yet known whether the bill would ever be submitted to Parliament, let alone whether it would be adopted or, if so, in what form.

18. While Finland acknowledged that the border closure had caused difficulties for many people, it had been obliged to take action to counter the human suffering caused by the decision taken by the Russian Federation to use people as tools for its drive to instrumentalize migration. The situation had also driven up criminal activity on the eastern border. Closing border crossings and centralizing the submission of applications for international protection were among the measures taken to protect national security and social stability.

19. **A representative of Finland** said that the duration of police custody could exceed seven days only in exceptional circumstances, which were strictly governed by law and related to the person's safety and the integrity of the investigation. Individuals could not be detained for more than 96 hours without a decision being taken whether to place them on remand or not. While statistics would be provided in writing, the overall trend was towards fewer and shorter placements in police custody.

20. Foreign remand prisoners were informed that they had the right to contact the diplomatic mission of their country of origin. Interpretation services were available for the explanation of a person's legal situation, and written information on detainee rights and obligations were, by law, to be made available in the most commonly spoken languages.

21. Deaths in custody were investigated by the Office of the Prosecutor General as a police offence. No court proceedings had been initiated in any of the cases that had arisen in 2022 or 2023. National Police Board guidelines on reporting, investigating and recording deaths in custody and on the treatment of persons in police custody would be updated in 2024 in coordination with the prosecution service. Changes would also be made to the guidelines on the treatment and monitoring of persons deprived of their liberty and early detection of potentially at-risk persons. None of the attempts to reform the treatment of persons in police custody, particularly intoxicated persons, or to shift responsibility for them to another authority had thus far succeeded. Where proceedings initiated in a case involving a death in custody led to a conviction, the family of the deceased could file a claim for damages under the Act on Compensation for Crime Damage.

22. Criminal proceedings had been brought against seven police officers in connection with the incident involving the use of pepper spray on peaceful protesters; one had been found guilty of negligent breach of official duty, while the other six had been acquitted. National Police Board regulations on the use of force would be updated by the end of 2024. Police conduct during demonstrations was governed by the Right of Assembly Act, the Police Act and the Public Order Act.

23. The Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) had been

translated into Finnish. A 60-minute digital course on the Istanbul Protocol was provided by the Deaconess Foundation to all persons working with refugees or on immigration matters. The authorities responsible for training had been made aware of the new toolkit for law enforcement personnel on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests. The police guidelines on topics such as crowd control, tactical negotiations and use of force were updated at least every five years or whenever required pursuant to a court decision. Police training in the fulfilment of human rights obligations was also valid for border guards. Human rights were a cross-cutting theme in all training, and the 2024–2026 curriculum at the Police University College placed even more emphasis on human rights than before and referred to a number of international treaties, including the Convention against Torture, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Code of Police Ethics. In recent years, training courses had placed special emphasis on the principles of non-discrimination and equality in policing, including the ban on ethnic profiling, and on the need to respect common values in situations where regulations did not provide a clear answer.

24. The National Police Board was updating its directive on health care. Persons deprived of their liberty had the right to the care required for their condition; those services were organized by the police and the well-being services counties and were free for detainees. While in police custody, detainees could be examined and receive other treatment and medication from either a doctor affiliated with the police or a doctor of their own choosing, although the latter would be at their own expense.

25. According to the Police University College, 930 cases of hate crimes in which the suspected motive had to do with ethnicity or nationality had been recorded in 2023. The largest targeted group was Ukrainians, followed by Russians, Estonians, Iraqis and Syrians.

26. **A representative of Finland** said that the organization of social and health services was the responsibility of the 21 well-being services counties and the City of Helsinki. The counties were self-governed and free to decide how to allocate funding, most of which came from the State, and whether to provide services themselves or subcontract them from other parties, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Rarely, a tiny fraction of the funding was earmarked by the Government for a specific cause. The level of State funding was calculated on the basis of certain indicators such as, for instance, the number of Sami or Swedish speakers in a given area. The rehabilitation units for victims of torture in Oulu and Helsinki were run by the Deaconess Foundation, which received part of its funding from the government grant authority, the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organizations.

27. The current government programme provided for a number of measures intended to put an end to various forms of violence by strengthening the ability of the public authorities, municipal actors and well-being services counties to prevent and identify cases of violence against women as well as domestic and intimate partner violence. The programme also included measures aimed at raising awareness of protection options among victims and improving access to services provided by shelters and rape crisis centres.

28. The Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence had developed a second action plan for the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which included 36 measures for relevant government agencies and NGOs. There was a nationwide helpline for victims of violence as well.

29. In recognition of the fact that women with disabilities were two to three times more likely to become victims of violence, the Committee had held a seminar on the topic of violence and persons with disabilities in 2023. As a 2022 study published by the Office of the Prime Minister had shown, obtaining help in the event of domestic violence depended on the type of disability, the victims' circumstances and the support provided by their friends and family. A radio and Internet campaign had been conducted to raise awareness of sheltered housing services among persons with disabilities and social and health-care professionals. Information about other forms of assistance for victims of domestic violence with disabilities had been disseminated through training and information fairs for social and health-care professionals. The accessibility of shelters had been significantly improved, and shelter employees had received training on the ramifications of violence experienced by persons

with disabilities. All shelters had at least one accessible space for families. Shelters were regulated by law and funded by the State; the budget had grown from €11.55 million in 2016 to €26.55 million in 2024. More than 5,160 people had used shelter services in 2022.

30. There were five regional service units for children with disabilities, which were responsible for examining and interviewing children in abuse cases at the request of the police, the prosecution service or the courts. The new Disability Services Act provided for a broader selection of services, including special services for the promotion of inclusion and supported decision-making. To fund those expanded disabilities services, the budget had been increased from €20 million to €30 million.

31. The Government had adopted an action plan to combat criminal activity by juveniles and gangs. That plan was focused on breaking the cycle of crime and contained over 40 measures relating to investigation, prosecution and punishment. The Government was also committed to reforming child welfare laws to ensure the well-being, safety and best interests of the child. In that connection, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health had appointed a preparatory group to work on matters concerning criminal activity and drug use by minors. The proposed reform was to be submitted to Parliament in late 2025.

32. **A representative of Finland** said that sterilization could be performed only for a specific set of reasons and only at the person's request. In the case of persons with disabilities, the request could be made by their legal representative if the person concerned was permanently unable to understand the meaning of sterilization. Even in such situations, however, the request could be made only if pregnancy would endanger the person's health, if offspring would be born with or would develop a serious abnormality or if the person's condition would seriously impair the person's ability to care for a child. The agreement of two medical doctors was necessary to perform a sterilization when pregnancy would endanger the person's life. The requirements for the approval of the procedure were even more rigorous in the case of the other two permissible grounds.

33. Moreover, in the case of an adult unable to take medical decisions due to a mental disorder or mental retardation, the previously described provisions must be applied together with the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients, whereby the legal representative of a relative or other person close to the patient had to be heard before a decision on the procedure was taken. Where a patient's preferences were not known, the treatment must ultimately be chosen on the basis of the patient's best interest. The new Disability Services and Assistance Act provided for supported decision-making with the aim of enhancing the self-determination of persons with disabilities. Persons under the age of 18 could not be sterilized unless there were compelling reasons for doing so.

34. The new Transgender Persons Act was designed to strengthen the right to self-determination, personal integrity and privacy and to promote non-discrimination by authorizing the recognition of legal gender to match a person's gender identity and appearance. A medical report and proof of infertility were no longer required for a change of gender to be recognized. Legislative steps were being taken to amend the Act to allow for transgender minors to have their chosen gender recognized as well.

35. While there was no law directly regulating surgery on intersex persons, a range of provisions in the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients – notably on treatment, self-determination, the right of minors to be heard and emergency care – applied when determining whether surgical intervention was warranted, as did the code of ethics contained in the Health-care Professionals Act. In addition, a working group had been established that had a mandate to make proposals for strengthening the right to self-determination of intersex children in line with the principle of the best interests of the child and in a manner commensurate with their age and level of development. Finland had sponsored the recently adopted Human Rights Council resolution 55/14 on combating discrimination, violence and harmful practices against intersex persons.

36. While there was no regulation on outdoor activities for persons held in psychiatric hospitals, having access to the outdoors was considered part of good care and was among the issues that the Parliamentary Ombudsman and other supervisory authorities took into account in their visits to such facilities. Nevertheless, the Parliamentary Ombudsman had recommended that the provision of outdoor activities for patients should be established as a

requirement in the Mental Health Act. In the case of older patients, the personal client plan, which was decided on by the health-care professionals jointly with the person concerned, provided for actions to support functional capacity, including through outdoor activities. Following a number of Supreme Court cases, as well as a case brought before the European Court of Human Rights, the law had been amended to require the issuance of an appealable administrative decision whenever medication formed part of an involuntary treatment regime.

37. **Ms. Maeda** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee encouraged the State party to renew the mandate of the steering group established to support the removal of remand prisoners from police detention facilities. The Committee regretted that not all juvenile offenders were segregated from adults and would be interested to hear whether the State party intended to maintain its reservation to article 10 (2) (b) and (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, whereby it did not deem an absolute prohibition on holding minors together with adults as appropriate.

38. Since the police initiated mediation in close to 90 per cent of domestic violence cases, and usually did so before the preliminary investigation was completed, it might be worth considering whether the power to propose mediation to victims should rest with the police. Moreover, and in the light of the recommendation made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence that priority should be given to prosecution in cases of intimate partner and domestic violence, it would be useful to know how the State party ensured in practice that mediation was not used in cases of repetitive or continuous violence and whether the matter would be addressed in the new guidelines to be issued by the National Police Board.

39. She invited the State party to provide more detailed information on its practice of detaining children over the age of 15, including unaccompanied minors, for immigration reasons, which undermined children's rights and best interests. Information would also be welcome regarding any plans to amend the Code of Judicial Procedure to explicitly establish the inadmissibility of evidence obtained through ill-treatment less severe than torture.

40. The Committee encouraged the State party to intensify its efforts to strengthen data collection, disaggregation and analysis in areas relevant to monitoring the implementation of the Convention in a more targeted and coordinated manner.

41. **Mr. Tuzmukhamedov** (Country Rapporteur) said that there was ample evidence from public statements by the Finns Party that anti-immigration sentiment pre-dated the recent events on the eastern border. The delegation was invited to clarify whether ill-treatment was an aggravating circumstance of the offence of torture or a separate offence and what was meant by "petty war crimes", which was not a concept envisaged under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Lastly, it would be interesting to hear the reasons why Finland had yet to put forward a candidate for membership in any of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies.

42. **Mr. Contesse** said that the definition of crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Criminal Code replicated the definition contained in the Rome Statute; therefore, it followed that there was no statute of limitations for the offence of torture when it had been committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against the civilian population or an international or domestic armed conflict or occupation. What he wished to know was whether torture that was committed in other contexts was also time-barred or not.

43. **Mr. Liu** said that, according to a leading international NGO based in Finland, legislative and policy changes concerning immigration and particularly the asylum system – for instance, the shortened deadline to apply for asylum, the reduction in government spending and the non-publication of relevant data – long predicated the closing of the eastern border. Moreover, there were reports of inefficiency and unequal treatment among applicants from different origins and ethnic backgrounds. The delegation was invited to comment on those reports and to describe how the State party's international obligations were being met in that domain.

44. Noting that the Government's decision to close eastern border crossings was jeopardizing the right of people from Russia to seek asylum in Finland and was at risk of breaching the principle of non-refoulement, said that, although the Government had stated that the closure was a temporary measure, the Committee had received reports that consideration was being given to more permanent measures. The delegation's comments in that regard would be appreciated. In view of the concerns regarding that situation expressed by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, he would like to learn more about the interaction between the Government and those two officials with regard to that issue.

45. **A representative of Finland** said that it was true that Finland had not proposed a candidate for any of the treaty bodies in quite some time, although the Government had had the pleasure of supporting several joint Nordic candidates. When it next did propose a candidate, it would use its standard procedure of issuing an open call for interested persons and would then ensure that the selection process was a transparent one.

46. **A representative of Finland** said that, in cases of domestic violence, intimate partner violence or violence against women, the decision as to whether the situation was suitable for mediation was taken by the lead police investigator on a case-by-case basis in consultation, if necessary, with the prosecutor. According to the existing National Police Board guidelines, cases involving repetitive or continuous violence were never to be referred for mediation. Mediation was an independent process that did not affect the progress of the criminal investigation in any way.

47. **A representative of Finland** said that detailed amendments to the laws on asylum were being developed, and careful consideration was being given to the draft provisions to ensure that they would be in accordance with the country's human rights obligations. Once those proposals had been finalized, they would then also be examined by the Parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee.

48. The Government had no plans to amend the provisions of the Aliens Act under which unaccompanied minors between the ages of 15 and 17 could be detained, but such a step was taken only as a last resort and for a very short time while preparations were being made for their deportation pursuant to a final rejection of an asylum application. Detention in such cases was extremely rare. In the great majority of cases, other non-custodial measures were put in place. Since 2017, a residence application had been available for minors. In 2023, no minors at all, whether unaccompanied or otherwise, had been detained.

49. **A representative of Finland** said that, with regard to the closure of the crossings along the border between Finland and the Russian Federation, the Government of Finland had decided that, given the current situation, the highest priority had to be given to national security and the country's social stability. Finland had not stopped accepting applications for international protection, however, which could still be made at all open border crossing points. There had been a few instances since the closure where persons had crossed the border from the Russian Federation to Finland and applied for asylum or international protection. Every one of them had been taken into the asylum process, and they were all currently in Finland awaiting a decision on their applications. No one had been pushed back to the Russian Federation.

50. **A representative of Finland** said that the answer to the question as to whether Finland was willing to retain the current policy under which minor remand prisoners could, in some cases, be held together with adult prisoners was "no". The Government did not wish to retain that policy and had been working to build more separate wards for juvenile remand and other inmates to counter the overcrowding that, in part, had made that necessary. The other factor was European Union directive 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children in criminal proceedings, which was binding for Finland and under which minors who turned 18 while in custody should, if in their best interests and those of the minors housed with them, remain in the facilities for juveniles. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal was to have no children, whether on remand or under sentencing, being held together with adults. Finland was also a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which used language concerning the best interest of children deprived of liberty similar to that used in the European Union directive

and in Finnish law. Nevertheless, the Government hoped to be able strike out that provision as soon as possible and was working to be able to do so.

51. While the Criminal Code had separate provisions on torture, no case law on that offence was available, and it was therefore quite difficult to foresee how the courts would interpret those provisions. Finland had a comparatively large number of persons serving lifetime sentences of imprisonment, and such sentences were generally handed down in cases involving elements either of torture or of other cruel or inhuman treatment. If a court ruled that the proper charge in a case was murder, however, it might very well not entertain a charge of torture or cruel treatment as well.

52. Very few offences were time-barred under Finnish law. The only crimes not subject to a statute of limitations were murder and some terrorist offences, as required by international law. The statute of limitations was 20 years for bringing a charge of torture and 30 years for the enforcement of a sentence for the offence of torture, so the period during which the offence could be addressed was still quite long. The maximum sentence for that offence was 12 years, but a case of torture could also be prosecuted as aggravated murder, which carried a sentence of life imprisonment or, if committed in connection with an armed conflict, as a war crime, which carried a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and neither of those offences was time-barred.

53. The term “petty war crime” that was used in the unofficial English translation of the Finnish Criminal Code was poorly chosen. What the term was meant to refer to was minor breaches of international law or conventions on war crimes of a less serious nature, such as, for example, charging a person with having violated article 28 of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War because they had run a canteen where prisoners were charged more than the local market price for soap. The term was in no way intended to downplay the hardship experienced by a person who had been a victim of a war crime.

54. **A representative of Finland** said that, as had been mentioned at the preceding meeting, the national terrorist threat assessment for 2024 issued by the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service had rated the current threat level as level 2 (elevated). Anti-terrorist action in Finland focused on prevention, and the primary responsibility in that regard lay with the police. The 2024 Security and Intelligence Service report stated that the greatest threat of violence came from some religious or ethnic minority groups and from far-right extremists.

55. Special attention had been devoted to the ethnic Russian minority group. At the start of the current war, the police met with all the Russian organizations in Finland with a view to ensuring the safety and security of Russian residents. Special arrangements were in place to guard against hate crimes directed at representatives of the Russian minority.

56. **A representative of Finland** said that, with respect to the concerns expressed by a member of the Committee regarding comments relating to asylum and migration, among other issues, made by Mr. Jussi Halla-aho, a leader of the nationalistic Finns Party, before assuming his current position as the Speaker of the Parliament, he wished to note that remarks made by Mr. Halla-aho in the past were in no way binding upon the Government of Finland. Before the Parliament passed any bill and before the President signed any legislation into law, legal opinions were obtained from the Constitutional Law Committee and the Chancellor of Justice to ensure that all provisions were compatible with the international commitments assumed by Finland.

57. **The Chair** said that the Committee was appreciative of the abundant, well-organized information that the delegation had provided during the interactive dialogue. The Committee was also very grateful for the State party’s staunch financial and political support of the Committee itself and the treaty body system as a whole, especially during such a critical period both for human rights around the world and for the United Nations itself.

58. **A representative of Finland** said that the interactive dialogue and review had served as an important opportunity for a discussion of her country’s achievements and challenges with respect to human rights. Responses to any questions that had not been answered during the review would be provided to the Committee within the 48-hour time period allowed for that purpose. The Committee’s concluding observations would be translated into Finnish and Swedish and would be widely distributed, published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and incorporated into the new database on concluding observations of United Nations and regional bodies. Representatives of all Ministries would review the Committee's concluding observations and follow up on their implementation.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.