



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 114th session

### Summary record of the 3119th meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 2 December 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Balcerzak

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

*Combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports of Armenia*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 3117th and 3118th meetings.

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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 twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports of Armenia (CERD/C/ARM/12-14; CERD/C/ARM/Q/12-14)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Armenia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Armenia**, introducing his country's combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports (CERD/C/ARM/12-14), said that the Government had faced unprecedented challenges during the reporting period, including the displacement of over 115,000 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians owing to military offensives and ethnic cleansing, necessitating expanded public services to ensure their access to education, healthcare, housing and employment. The Government had deployed significant efforts to find resources to provide adequate funding to address the humanitarian emergency and implement mid- and long-term support programmes, including voluntary commitments at the Global Refugee Forum held in 2023. Despite the unprecedented situation, Armenia had demonstrated its continued dedication to effective cooperation with international human rights bodies and mechanisms. In recent years, Armenia had ratified numerous international treaties and instruments and had become a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Government continued to take national measures to protect human rights, including the adoption of the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights 2023–2025, which focused on vulnerable groups and addressed discrimination. All action plans and reports were prepared in consultation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and a national mechanism for reporting, implementation and follow-up had been established to institutionalize cooperation with civil society.
3. Armenia was dedicated to fostering an environment of mutual respect, understanding, cooperation, tolerance and intercultural dialogue for all persons residing in the country, regardless of their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity. In 2021, it had established a national minorities day in its official list of holidays, and, in 2024, 3 August had been made the national day of commemoration for the victims of the 2014 Yazidi genocide in Sinjar, Iraq. Integration and inclusion policies in Armenia concerned both, on the one hand, linguistic and religious minorities historically present in the country and, on the other, refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. The draft law on national minorities was currently being brought into line with international best practices and standards and had been reviewed by bodies of the Council of Europe, including the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). There was also a draft law on ensuring equality, and the new Law on Audiovisual Media prohibited the broadcasting of programmes that aimed to promote discrimination and promoted ethical standards in the media to prevent discriminatory content. National minorities had been allocated quotas on public radio for the production and broadcast of native language programmes. The new Criminal Code contained anti-discrimination and hate crime provisions featuring an open list of protected characteristics, including race, skin colour, membership of an ethnic minority and religion.
4. With a view to combating exclusion and marginalization through inclusive education, the education system was undergoing large-scale reforms, from the revision of curricula to the building of physical infrastructure. For example, in 2023, almost 1,000 textbooks had been published in national minority languages, and a large kindergarten was currently being constructed in Alagyaz, the largest Yezidi community in Armenia. The Government was also taking measures to train and recruit teachers capable of giving lessons in minority languages in public schools. Additionally, Armenia had worked to preserve the traditions, cultural heritage and geographical names of minority communities, while promoting regional stability and intercultural dialogue, including by passing laws on geographical names and local self-governance. On the basis of consultations with ethnic minority communities, settlements populated by ethnic minorities had been excluded from the community enlargement process, a series of administrative territorial reforms aimed at pooling the resources of communities, settlements, villages and towns.

5. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to protecting racial, ethnic and religious groups from threats, eradicating racism and xenophobia, fostering an inclusive and tolerant society, preserving historical, civilizational and cultural heritage and ensuring stability, peace and sustainable economic development in the region.

6. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would welcome details of the specific steps taken by the Government to align its domestic legal framework with the Convention and updated information on how the Convention was applied by domestic courts. He also wished to know whether the action plan for the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights had been updated to cover the years 2023–2025.

7. Regarding the draft law on national minorities, he would appreciate clarification of the use of the word “national” in the draft title, which could lead to confusion since the words “ethnic” and “religious” were the terms used in the Armenian census when classifying minorities. He would be grateful for information on how the joint opinion on the draft law issued by the Council of Europe Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity and the Venice Commission in June 2024 had been received in the State party and on the current status of the draft law. He would also appreciate an explanation of the State party's plans to establish a council of national minorities. It would be useful to learn more about the draft law on ensuring equality, including whether it would constitute a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, prohibit organizations that promoted racial discrimination and criminalize participation in such organizations and be reviewed by the Venice Commission. He also wished to know whether Armenian domestic law explicitly prohibited indirect discrimination and, if not, whether the State party would consider including provisions to ban such discrimination in future legislation.

8. He would be grateful if the delegation could indicate the yearly budget of the Office of the Human Rights Defender, including a breakdown of its operational budget lines, and the number of staff it employed. He also wished to know whether the remuneration of the Human Rights Defender was public information and how it compared to that of other high-ranking government officials, and would welcome examples of complaints received by the Office of the Human Rights Defender about discrimination experienced because of the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and data on the number of discrimination complaints received annually by the Office over the previous five years, distinguishing between those against public bodies and those against private entities. He also wished to know whether any of those complaints had resulted in court proceedings.

9. It would be useful to receive a full account of the measures taken to establish a comprehensive framework for addressing discrimination and hate speech in schools, particularly regarding religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, to enhance equality awareness, support anti-bullying efforts and address underreporting of harassment. He also wished to know how the State party intended to ensure that human rights education and the teaching of history, including in relation to abuses in the Soviet era and thereafter, were comprehensive and free from political distortions. He would be interested in hearing about how the Government would address distortions in school textbooks, such as the treatment of the events of 1 March 2008.

10. The Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan, which had been erected to the memory of the 1.5 million Armenians who had died in 1915 and 1916 in deportations and mass killings, also held memorials for other victims of pogroms and conflicts. He wondered whether there had been any victims of the Armenian authorities against their own people. It was not clear which actors were considered to be the perpetrators of the other genocides recognized by Armenia, namely against the Yezidis and Assyrians.

11. Lastly, he would welcome an explanation of how the State party ensured that school curricula and public commemorations addressed all aspects of history, including concerns about historic figures like Garegin Ter-Harutyunyan, better known by his nom de guerre Garegin Nzhdeh, who was alleged to have collaborated with fascist regimes, and how such efforts fostered tolerance and human rights without discrimination; whether the human rights education activities conducted by the Human Rights Defender in 2023 were adequate and sufficient; and whether grass-roots human rights awareness programmes addressed rights

under the Convention and were accessible to ethnic minorities, especially where language barriers existed.

12. **A representative of Armenia** said that a human rights action plan for 2023–2025 had been adopted, continuing prior strategies. Regarding the draft law on national minorities, there were linguistic challenges in translating from Armenian to English, as the Armenian word used to describe minorities could be translated as either “national” or “ethnic”, depending on the context. The adoption of the draft law on national minorities had been delayed on account of sensitivities among minority groups, who had previously opposed such legislation.

13. The draft legislation on ensuring legal equality and protection from discrimination was currently before the parliament for consideration. Its content was sensitive and required careful discussion.

14. The latter part of his life notwithstanding, Garegin Nzhdeh had been an important historical figure in Armenia in the early twentieth century.

15. It was regrettable that Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen had not referred to the Armenian genocide by name.

16. **A representative of Armenia** said that the provisions of the Convention had been directly incorporated into national legislation, and a number of bills had been submitted for adoption with a view to further harmonizing national laws with the Convention. Equality policies had been put in place in the areas of education, employment and public services with the aim of ensuring equality of opportunity and equitable treatment for all.

17. The assessment of the 2022 National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights and its accompanying action plan had found that, of the 11 measures relating to equality and non-discrimination outlined in the strategy, 7 had been fully implemented, 3 had been partially implemented and 1 had not been implemented. One of the key aims of the action plan, to submit to the parliament the draft legislation on equality and non-discrimination, had been achieved. In fulfilment of the other key aims, training programmes had been developed to improve awareness of equality and non-discrimination among police officers, investigators, prosecutors and judges, campaigns had been organized to educate the public on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and gaps in the legal framework in the area of hate speech had been identified following an assessment of relevant data collection mechanisms conducted in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

18. Measures had been put in place to safeguard the rights of displaced persons, including those who had been forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, and persons with disabilities. A bill was being drafted with a view to regulating the status and rights of persons missing in conditions and circumstances arising from military operations.

19. The draft legislation on equality and anti-discrimination had been submitted to the Council of Europe for review in July 2023 and had been revised on the basis of the feedback received. The draft included several key provisions, such as the establishment of a general prohibition on discrimination, the designation of the Office of the Human Rights Defender as the main body responsible for ensuring equality and protecting against discrimination and the enumeration of a non-exhaustive list of protected characteristics.

20. Article 3 of the draft legislation on national minorities defined the term “national minority” as a group residing in Armenia since its independence that constituted a numerical minority and was differentiated by its language, culture or traditions.

21. Public incitement of hatred or discrimination, together with the dissemination of materials for those purposes, and justifying or advocating violence were now criminalized under articles 329 and 330 of the newly adopted Criminal Code.

22. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Council on National Minorities, which had been established in 2019, worked under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister. During the Council’s most recent session, its annual budget had been increased to 25 million Armenian drams. According to the Council’s Charter, its work consisted of ensuring participation in the drafting of legislation affecting the interests of national

minorities, coordinating political, economic and ethical matters relating to national minorities and discussing complaints and proposals submitted by citizens and associations.

23. Following the 2015 constitutional amendments, the constitutional law on the Office of the Human Rights Defender had entered into force in 2017, establishing the Office as an independent body tasked with monitoring respect for human rights and freedoms, addressing violations thereof and improving legislation relevant to those areas. Following the 2022 constitutional amendments, the Office's mandate had been expanded to cover violations of the rights and freedoms of whistle-blowers and persons affiliated with them. The Office cooperated with legislative, executive and judicial bodies and law enforcement agencies, while maintaining institutional independence, provided amicus briefs to the Constitutional Court in relevant cases and participated in the preparation of reports to be submitted to human rights monitoring bodies. The Office's budget was part of the State budget, and rules were in place to ensure that its budget allocation was never reduced.

24. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he would welcome clarification as to who had been responsible for the violence and racial problems that had occurred in Armenia in the past and what role the then-Government of Armenia had played in them.

25. **Ms. Chung** (Country Task Force) said that it would be helpful to learn whether the authorities had any plans to differentiate between national, ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups in the census. She would welcome an account of how the State party gathered its statistics on ethnic groups. It was unclear to her why the State party's report contained a large amount of information about Azerbaijanis while there was no mention of that group in the census statistics.

26. **Mr. Diaby** asked whether the State party had any plans to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention recognizing the Committee's competence to receive and consider individual communications.

27. **A representative of Armenia** said that history and truth were very important; unfortunately, some historical facts were now being used against Armenia as a means of hybrid warfare.

28. The question of whether to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention would once again be brought to the attention of senior authorities.

29. While there were no Azerbaijanis living in Armenia, the periodic report reflected the security and political situation at the time it had been drafted. The security situation in the region remained tense; however, peace and stability would be achievable with genuine efforts from the leadership of both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

30. **A representative of Armenia** said that an overhaul of the public education curricula had begun in 2021, accompanied by updated training for teachers. With support from the European Union, the focus was shifting to competency-based and results-based approaches. The themes of tolerance and non-discrimination were mainstreamed in all subjects rather than examined in stand-alone modules. In grades 8 and above, students were taught about the core values of democracy and coexistence, the ban on hate speech and intolerance and the mechanisms of the rule of law. A cultural diversity project had been designed to foster students' respect for different cultures and ensure cooperation between different ethnicities. While higher education institutions exercised academic freedom and autonomy, they were expected to include universal ethical norms in their charters.

31. The history syllabus placed emphasis on the importance of preserving the culture, traditions, history and religion of national minorities. New history textbooks had been piloted in one region of the country and were now being rolled out nationwide. To date, grades 8 and below had received the new materials, meaning that textbooks covering facts about the early twentieth century had not yet been replaced. The authorities were engaged in a thorough process designed to select the most appropriate, unbiased materials.

32. In the area of non-formal education, the authorities were promoting civic and human rights education through projects with State and non-State partners, including the Council of Europe and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

33. **A representative of Armenia** said that the draft law on national minorities did not list ethnicity as one of the factors to be taken into account when determining whether a group should be classed as a national minority. As mentioned earlier, the word in Armenian for “ethnicity” and “nationality” was the same.

34. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Udis were not among the 11 national minorities recognized by her Government. Data on the nationality, gender, age, religion, linguistic skills, educational level, migration status and urban and rural distribution of the country’s residents had been obtained through the 2022 census, which had been conducted in line with the relevant recommendations of the United Nations. Statistics on births and deaths during the period 2018–2022, disaggregated by nationality, had been published in 2023. Pursuant to the Law on Official Statistics, individuals were entitled to choose whether or not to identify as belonging to a national minority. That right was also provided for in the draft law on national minorities, which established that the person concerned should not face adverse consequences as a result of his or her choice.

35. A total of 79 religious organizations were registered in Armenia. Twelve of those organizations were associated with a national minority; the Yazidi, Assyrian, Jewish and Russian minorities all had their own associations. Two new Yazidi organizations and one Russian Orthodox church had been registered during the reporting period.

36. **Ms. Shepherd** said that, in view of the State party’s difficult past, she would like to know whether history was taught as a compulsory subject at all levels of education.

37. **Mr. Sibande** said that he wished to learn whether the State party had established institutions, other than the Office of the Human Rights Defender, to ensure accountability for human rights violations and, if so, whether those institutions applied and enforced the Convention. The delegation might also describe the steps taken by the judiciary to guarantee that citizens were able to enjoy their rights under the Convention.

38. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that she would appreciate examples of measures implemented to ensure observance of the principles of equality and non-discrimination within the education system.

39. **A representative of Armenia** said that the study of history was compulsory for all students from the sixth grade. Specialists had been employed to ensure that history courses were delivered in a manner that was age-appropriate and would not incite hatred. Teachers made use of a wide range of educational tools in order to develop their students’ skills. The Government was working to apply international best practices by promoting the teaching of topics such as human rights and non-discrimination across the curriculum. Ensuring the implementation of that curriculum remained a challenge.

40. **A representative of Armenia** said that the education system was being reformed not only to help improve students’ skills, but also to foster a change in societal attitudes.

41. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Convention was binding in Armenian law. Many national laws, including the new Criminal Code, had been adopted in order to ensure compliance with its provisions. One example of an institution, other than the Office of the Human Rights Defender, that was competent to address human rights issues was the Office of the Representative on International Legal Matters.

42. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Deputy Prime Minister led a governmental committee that had responsibilities in the area of human rights. Its duties included ensuring the application of the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, monitoring the implementation of the international conventions to which Armenia was a party and preparing the reports to be submitted under those instruments.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.*

43. **Ms. Chung** said that she would like to know when the 2022 census would be published in English and what methodology had been used to obtain data on the ethnic composition of the population. Information relating to small ethnic groups, such as the Lom and the Molokans, would be particularly welcome. She wondered whether the State party had given effect to the recommendation in paragraph 16 of the Committee’s previous

concluding observations ([CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11](#)) by conducting surveys on the enjoyment by those small groups of their rights under the Convention and, if so, what the results were.

44. She would be grateful for economic and social statistics, disaggregated by sex, gender, age, disability status and national and ethnic origin, on the different groups living in the State party. Statistics on early marriage and the composition of the prison population, disaggregated by ethnicity, would also be appreciated. She wished to know what accounted for the continuous decrease in the State party's population since 1989 and whether that fall had been observed among all ethno-religious minorities.

45. She would be interested to hear about any measures, taken or envisaged, to guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of civil and political rights by members of all ethnic and ethno-religious groups. In view of reports of the limited representation of individuals from vulnerable and marginalized groups in the National Assembly, she would like to know exactly how many seats were held by persons belonging to an ethnic minority. In that connection, it would be helpful to learn what steps had been taken to implement the recommendations in paragraph 22 of the Committee's previous concluding observations, which pertained to the need to review the parliamentary quota system and ensure the representation of minority groups within public bodies.

46. Further details of the case of Sashik Sultanyan, a Yazidi activist who had been charged with incitement to hatred after sharing concerns about the human rights situation of Yazidi citizens, would be appreciated. It would be helpful to know what steps had been taken to address the lack of representation of the Yazidi community and other ethnic and ethno-religious minorities in public and political life. She would be grateful for the delegation's comments on reports that persons belonging to those groups had been forced to emigrate abroad and that members of the Jewish community were increasingly subjected to antisemitic comments. An explanation of the reasons behind the lack of participation by Armenian civil society organizations in the current review would be welcome.

47. She wondered whether the State party gathered data on the ethnicity and nationality of the beneficiaries of its employment and social assistance programmes. In view of reports that indirect discrimination meant that certain Yazidi villages in Aragatsotn Province offered poor socioeconomic conditions and lacked basic infrastructure, she wished to know what the State party was doing to address that situation and to guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of economic, cultural and social rights by members of ethnic and ethno-religious minorities. The Committee would appreciate the delegation's comments on allegations that the State party had failed to prevent the sale by third parties of land owned by members of the Yazidi community and that persons belonging to that group had been excluded from the land privatization process that had taken place from the early 1990s to the early 2000s.

48. She would welcome information on any steps taken to improve school attendance rates among students from ethnic minority groups, which remained significantly below average, and address the fact that such students were more likely to drop out of secondary education. The delegation might describe what had been done to guarantee that members of ethnic minorities had access to high-quality teaching in the official and relevant minority languages at all levels of education. In particular, it would be helpful to learn whether measures were being implemented to ensure that Yazidi children received a preschool education in their own language. She would like to know how the State party planned to increase the number of specialist minority language teachers and tackle the transport difficulties faced during the colder months by Yazidi teachers who worked in villages other than their own.

49. The Committee would appreciate a description of the measures adopted to address early and forced marriage, which remained a widespread practice among the national minorities, in particular the Yazidi community. It would be helpful to learn whether forced marriage had been criminalized and, if so, how many convictions had been obtained. She would be grateful if the delegation could address reports that the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights did not provide for measures to promote the rights of the national minorities and the development of their cultural life.

50. It would be useful to hear about any measures implemented to support women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities from Nagorno-Karabakh who were

seeking asylum, taking into account any intersectional discrimination they might face. She would like to know what steps had been taken to protect women belonging to ethnic and ethno-religious minorities from all forms of gender-based violence, investigate reports of such violence, prosecute the perpetrators and provide reparations to the victims. Information on what had been done to guarantee women's participation in the peacebuilding process would be welcome. She would be interested to learn whether asylum was granted to persons seeking protection from gender-based violence and, if so, how many women had obtained asylum on those grounds. She wondered what action had been taken in response to reports that Yazidi women had been subjected to racist abuse when using reproductive health services.

51. **A representative of Armenia** said that the findings of the 2022 census would soon be published in English. The Government was closely cooperating with relevant United Nations agencies in order to improve the production of statistics. Not all of the data requested by the Committee was available. The decrease in the national population was due to a combination of security concerns and economic difficulties: Armenia had experienced a brain drain, with highly qualified professionals seeking employment opportunities abroad. The Government was working to deliver economic growth and prosperity and to normalize relations with neighbouring countries in order to develop stability and peace in the region.

52. Members of ethnic minorities enjoyed the freedoms of opinion and assembly and other fundamental rights. Representatives of the four main ethnic minorities were allocated seats in the National Assembly. Ethnic minorities were also well represented in local authorities. Settlements with large ethnic minority populations received additional funding in order to build new infrastructure, including roads and water pipelines; therefore, the suggestion that such communities were subjected to indirect discrimination was inaccurate. Some communities lacked infrastructure owing to weak economic performance over a 30-year period. Now that Armenia was enjoying double digit growth, the Government was taking steps to ensure that settlements populated by ethnic minorities benefited from the proceeds. The allocation of privatized land was a general issue that did not exclusively affect ethnic minorities. A special transitional justice mechanism had recently been established in order to examine the question of land privatization since the country's independence, among other issues.

53. The Government understood that women should have an important say in peacebuilding. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was working on the third national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which would run from 2025. The Government was committed to increasing the number of female decision makers, including at the highest level.

54. Allegations of forced deportation from Armenia were false. They had been fabricated in order to justify unacceptable territorial claims against Armenia.

55. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport had issued a decree on the reimbursement of transport costs for teachers and students, which was especially useful for teachers and students living in areas populated by Yezidis and other national minorities. Transport costs were reimbursed at the market rate.

56. The right of everyone to education was enshrined in the Constitution and the Law on Education, whose article 4 (10) stated that the education of national minorities could be organized in their native or national language with parallel instruction in Armenian. In November 2023, the National Assembly had adopted an education strategy known as the State Programme for the Development of Education until 2030. One of the three main goals of the strategy was to ensure the accessibility of good quality education services for all. The strategy set out measures to improve education for national minorities, such as boosting teacher numbers and expanding the preschool network in areas inhabited by national minorities. The Government was currently implementing a large-scale infrastructure programme in order to build, rebuild or renovate 300 schools and 500 kindergartens throughout the country. Construction work on 157 of the planned 500 new kindergartens had finished, and was in progress on a further 207. Communities with large minority populations received a larger proportion of State funding for preschool education, which allowed them to construct, rebuild or renovate kindergartens to meet public demand. In keeping with the



Constitution, preschool education could be organized in a native or national language with parallel teaching in Armenian. Thirty-four new schools had been built and 223 were under construction, including in areas where national minorities lived.

57. Under the new educational criteria adopted in 2021, it was envisaged that students from national minorities would acquire the competencies to communicate, read and write in their mother tongue. In the 2023/24 academic year, 4,800 students, out of approximately 425,000 attending the country's 1,400 schools, belonged to national minorities. They included Yezidi, Kurdish, Assyrian, Russian, Georgian, Ukrainian, Belarusians, Jewish, Greek and German students. By law, children from national minorities could receive instruction in their mother tongue where such classes were available. If they were not, the parents must enrol their children in a school of their choice. In addition, mother-tongue language and literature were taught as specialized subjects for three or four hours per week at the primary, basic and secondary levels. In places where few students from national minorities lived, mother-tongue education was provided as an extracurricular activity. The Government had published electronic textbooks for the teaching of various subjects in minority languages.

58. The Government also took steps to promote the training and qualification of teachers of national minority languages, many of whom, particularly those who belonged to the Yezidi minority, had not completed higher education. The Government therefore encouraged them to enrol in higher education and employed a range of additional training methods.

59. **Ms. Tlakula** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that the Venice Commission, in its report on the draft law on national minorities, had expressed concern about the proposed definition of national minorities and especially the requirement for them to have been "historically formed" in Armenia, which might limit the legal protection of certain minorities deemed not to have a historical connection with the country. She wondered how the State party intended to address that concern and others raised in the Commission's report.

60. **Mr. Sibande** said that he would be interested to know whether any investigations had been conducted into alleged human rights violations committed against Azerbaijani nationals, including hate speech, hate crimes and ill-treatment of prisoners of war. If so, he would like to know which human rights institutions had conducted the investigations and whether they had published their findings.

61. The Committee wished to know whether the State party monitored the issue of gender-based violence among the minority population. In particular, it would be interested to know whether the State party had collected data or conducted research on gender-based violence and violence against women from minority groups, including Molokan, Russian, Assyrian, Ukrainian, Indian, Iranian, Greek and Georgian women. Such data or research would be useful in order to compare the situation of minority women with that of women in general.

62. Lastly, in the sphere of labour rights, he wondered whether any studies had been carried out on the equal pay and equal treatment of workers. Did workers from minority groups enjoy equal pay and, if not, how did their remuneration compare with that of workers in general?

63. **A representative of Armenia** said that no investigations had been conducted into allegations of discrimination against Azerbaijanis. The Azerbaijanis who had been living in Armenia during the Soviet period had left the country voluntarily, had been able to exchange their property, and had received compensation. By contrast, Armenians living in Azerbaijan had been killed in pogroms at Baku, Sumgait and Ganja. Allegations that Armenia was responsible for discrimination and other human rights violations – which had not been raised in the previous 30 years – were purely artificial and were now being driven by the Government of Azerbaijan to suggest moral equivalence with its own actions in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia was not holding any Azerbaijani prisoners of war, but 23 Armenian prisoners of war were still in captivity in Azerbaijan. He called upon the Committee to support all efforts to obtain their unconditional release.

64. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Government was inclined to accept the recommendation of the Venice Commission regarding the draft law on national minorities. Accordingly, it had decided to remove from the definition the reference to national minorities having been "historically formed" in Armenia. In the current version of the draft law, a

national minority was defined as a group that had resided in Armenia since the declaration of independence, that constituted a numerical minority compared to the general population, that was differentiated by its language, culture or traditions and that was actively working to preserve its cultural identity.

65. Until recently, Armenia had no recorded cases of hate speech or hate crimes. However, during 2023, two criminal cases had been opened; one pertaining to racially aggravated murder and another to racially aggravated destruction of or damage to property. Although both cases were still at the pretrial investigation stage, criminal charges had been brought and the cases would soon be heard by the courts. In 2024, a criminal case had been opened under the provisions of the Criminal Code pertaining to discrimination, obstruction of the right to freedom of conscience or religion, public incitement to hatred and discrimination, and incitement to violence based on racial discrimination. That case was also under investigation and criminal charges had been brought. Another case had been opened under article 330 of the Criminal Code, which dealt with incitement to racial violence through the mass media or information and communications technology.

66. It should be noted that, under Armenian criminal procedure, in cases of hate speech or hate crimes – like those of domestic violence – proceedings were typically instituted on the basis of a complaint by an individual. If the victim subsequently decided not to press charges, the State could continue the prosecution in the public interest, given the importance it attached to such cases and the vulnerability of victims.

67. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Government had published a strategy for the preservation, development and popularization of Armenian culture for the period 2023–2027. The strategy, which included 50 different initiatives, placed special emphasis on the cultural heritage of national minorities, the preservation of their monuments and the promotion of their contemporary culture. The State also recognized the importance of intangible cultural heritage and had enriched the national intangible heritage list by adding, for example, the Pontic dialect of Greek and the Yezidi wedding ritual. Both the State and international partners had provided funding to promote the cultural heritage and traditions of minorities. The cultures of all 11 national minorities were celebrated through festivals, concerts and other events. One recent landmark cultural event had been the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jangir Agha, who in 1918 had been instrumental in building the First Republic of Armenia and who was considered a hero by the Yezidi people. The State also provided funding for newspapers and other media outlets in the languages of all national minorities.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*