



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

Distr.: General
29 April 2025

Original: English

Committee against Torture Eighty-second session

Summary record of the 2187th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 16 April 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Heller

Contents

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

Fifth periodic report of Armenia (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



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

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

Fifth periodic report of Armenia (continued) (CAT/C/ARM/5;
CAT/C/ARM/QPR/5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Armenia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Armenia**, resuming her delegation's replies to the questions raised at the previous meeting (CAT/C/SR.2184), said that amnesties could not apply to persons who had committed the crime of torture as defined by Armenian criminal law. The definition of "State official" had been broadened to include individuals acting on behalf of State or local government bodies or non-commercial entities established by the State or a community. Any such person could be held criminally liable for having committed torture.
3. Armenia remained fully committed to aligning its national laws with the requirements of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In that context, amendments to the law on mutual legal assistance had been drafted and were undergoing public consultation. In addition, there were plans to provide relevant capacity-building training for public officials, Investigative Committee officers and judges, with support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
4. The necessary laws on alternatives to custodial measures had already been adopted and were currently in force. According to the Probation Service, as of 2024, 1,375 persons awaiting trial had been placed under house arrest and 793 under administrative supervision, while 116 had been remanded in custody. Although the number of applications submitted by prosecutors for pretrial detention orders had increased significantly in recent years, the percentage of applications that judges had granted had generally decreased with the introduction of the new Code of Criminal Procedure in July 2022. Probation officers had been given training on the new laws, and the Government was monitoring the implementation of the relevant amendments. With regard to the question raised about the tax on legal services, a bill was currently before the parliament that would allow lawyers to devote up to 5 per cent of their caseload to pro bono legal services on a tax-free basis.
5. With respect to the question about the informal criminal hierarchy in prisons, the amendments to the Criminal Code were designed to prohibit certain activities often associated with inmates who held significant authority within criminal groups, such as creating or leading criminal groups, promoting a criminal subculture and participating in or recruiting for such groups. The Penitentiary Service played a key role in the enforcement of that law, closely cooperating with investigative bodies, the prosecutor's office and other law enforcement agencies to ensure timely information exchange and coordinated action. A new department of the central Penitentiary Service and its regional branches was now serving as an intelligence unit and was equipped with tools equivalent to those used by the police. Tackling the criminal subcultures existing in the nation's penal institutions was a top priority for the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
6. The fight against corruption remained another priority for the Government. The national anti-corruption strategy for 2023–2026 focused on improving the legal and institutional framework, promoting anti-corruption education and public awareness, promoting business integrity and strengthening anti-corruption monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. An important element in that fight was the development of a whistle-blower system. In accordance with the law on that system, whistle-blowers could submit anonymous reports by means of a confidential dedicated electronic platform. To ensure access for persons deprived of liberty, the Minister of Justice had installed a direct link to the platform on computers used for video calls in penitentiary institutions.
7. There was no discrimination against persons convicted of sexual offences or based on sexual orientation in the penitentiary system. The Penitentiary Service ensured equal treatment, regardless of nationality, race, gender, religion, political opinion or other status. The Service was committed to eliminating any form of discrimination and to ensuring equal

conditions of detention. The human rights training provided to prison staff covered topics such as non-discrimination.

8. Armenia had introduced a strategy for preventing suicide and self-harm in penitentiary institutions. Her delegation would provide the Committee with detailed statistics from 2022 to 2025 on the relevant cases. A tool for evaluating the risk of suicide and self-harm among inmates had been developed in cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2023. Training sessions on suicide prevention for staff had been held in 2025. In addition, since 2022 all penitentiary institutions had implemented mental health and suicide risk screening tools. Upon admission, all inmates were assessed and referred to psychologists for further evaluation if needed. Every case of suicide or attempted suicide or self-harm was reported to the investigative authorities for appropriate action. Moreover, in all instances of violence within penitentiary institutions, whether directed at inmates or prison staff, a comprehensive investigation was launched.

9. **A representative of Armenia** said that significant progress had been made in 2023 on a comprehensive police reform with the establishment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as a civilian oversight body for the police. The Ministry was responsible for policymaking in the areas of public safety, security, migration and disaster risk management, and it strove to introduce human rights-based approaches in policing and public services while implementing reforms in those areas. The Government had adopted a police reform strategy that included police officer training on issues of torture, gender-based violence, crowd control and the use of proportionate force.

10. Video surveillance had been widely introduced to ensure transparency in police actions and police accountability. With regard to the question that had been raised about video recordings in interrogation rooms, under the new Code of Criminal Procedure, interrogations were no longer conducted by police officers but rather by officers of the Investigative Committee. Surveillance cameras were installed in police stations, and patrol police had body cameras that were switched on at all times. Efforts were currently under way to equip community police, who operated detention centres, with similar cameras.

11. Efforts were being made to improve police detention facilities. Currently, the Ministry was in the process of evaluating each facility's needs and the availability of financial resources for their renovation. There were 22 specially equipped vehicles for transporting persons remanded in custody.

12. Armenia had a fully functional police training complex that provided training on such issues as fundamental rights, including the freedom of assembly and the prohibition of torture. Officers had completed training in identifying and documenting cases of torture. In total, during the previous five years, 689 officers of senior and middle ranks had received training. A methodology for evaluating the quality of that training and courses on the Convention and the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) were being developed. With support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 1,700 community police officers had been trained to respond to cases of domestic violence.

13. With regard to accountability and the excessive use of force, the Internal Security and Anti-Corruption Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs brought disciplinary proceedings in cases of alleged torture, ill-treatment or other form of violence by police officers. Officers had been dismissed for using excessive force in obstructing journalists' lawful activities and for the excessive use of force during the protests of April 2018 and June 2015. Disciplinary proceedings had been initiated for less serious cases of police misconduct during the demonstrations.

14. Concerning the Istanbul Protocol, under the proposed amendments to the law on detentions and arrests dealing with medical examination reports related to torture or other forms of ill-treatment, such reports were to be prepared by an emergency medical professional if a detained person stated that he or she had been subjected to torture or ill-treatment, if the medical professional suspected that torture or ill-treatment might have occurred or if the administrative authorities of a police detention facility informed the medical professional about suspected cases. In order to ensure the independence of medical professionals from the police, medical examinations in police detention facilities had been

conducted exclusively by Ambulance Service doctors since 2022. The proposed amendments were currently in their second reading in the parliament. In collaboration with the Council of Europe, there were plans to provide medical professionals, police officers and investigators with training on the proposed changes to the law and the methodology for drawing up reports on torture and ill-treatment.

15. With respect to the question raised concerning the equipment used by special units during crowd control operations, the 2024 law established the new Police Guard to serve as a specialized police service for maintaining public order and ensuring public security. The law laid down clear, detailed criteria for legal and proportionate use of force, police equipment and firearms by Guard officers in accordance with international standards. The law had been developed in cooperation with Council of Europe experts and incorporated relevant international standards, including the Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests and applicable case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Under that law, force could be legally used only when it was absolutely necessary in order to conduct police activities properly. Furthermore, a Guard officer was authorized to use special equipment or firearms only after successfully completing training in their use. The police reform strategy envisaged the establishment of special tactical teams within the Guard forces which would undergo advanced training in crowd control and the proportionate use of force.

16. In 2024, the Government had conducted training for penitentiary officials in dealing with cases of asylum in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Moreover, the Bar Association had provided the Penitentiary Service with leaflets and posters relating to asylum for distribution to penal institutions, where they were placed in visible locations. The materials were available in Armenian, English, Arabic, Russian, Farsi, Turkish, Spanish and French and contained information about asylum, the grounds and procedures for granting asylum and the rights of asylum-seekers.

17. **A representative of Armenia** said that, as had been noted, the large-scale investigation into the events of March 2008 was ongoing. The prosecution of three former police officer implicated in those events had become time barred in September 2023. Four other individuals had been convicted for their role in what had happened. Special teams ensured that the investigation was carried out effectively. Thousands of witnesses, including police officers and members of ambulance crews, had been interviewed, and ballistic analyses were being performed. Comprehensive information on the status of the investigation would be provided to the Committee in writing.

18. In December 2023, the Court of Cassation, referring to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Virabyan v. Armenia*, had held that the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) took precedence over domestic laws. Ultimately, after the European Court had issued an advisory opinion as requested by the Court of Cassation, two defendants had been convicted on charges of torture. Under newly adopted domestic legislation, no statute of limitations could be applied to persons who committed acts of torture or crimes involving abuse of authority.

19. Criminal proceedings had been instituted against the director of the State-owned care home at which a resident had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Four other staff members at the care home, including the psychiatrist, had also been charged. The proceedings were ongoing.

20. In the second of the two cases in which convictions on charges of torture had been secured in 2024, a police detective had been given a 4-year prison sentence, while another official had been punished for falsifying information in a bid to hide evidence of a crime. In 2025, as well, there had been two trials involving allegations of torture. One had culminated in an acquittal, while, in the other, the defendant had been sentenced to 4 years in prison.

21. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had taken steps to prevent incidents such as those that had occurred at the care home. Care institutions were subject to regular oversight. The main focus of oversight activities was on quality of care and living conditions, patient rights and the existence of safe and effective

complaints mechanisms. A law on social assistance adopted in late 2024 provided for the involvement of civil society in the oversight of institutions offering residential care. That law was the cornerstone of an edifice for the oversight of care services in Armenia.

22. In addition to legislative and other developments, an order that would facilitate the anonymous submission of complaints of torture and degrading treatment in care institutions for older persons and persons with disabilities was being drafted. Complaints could already be submitted anonymously, of course, but the planned order would specify the channels through which they were to be submitted and ensure that they were referred to the proper law enforcement authorities.

23. Training courses were organized as part of a broader strategy to prevent torture and ill-treatment. The courses were on such topics as the rights of persons with disabilities and had been taken by more than 2,000 caregivers.

24. A procedure for the referral of child victims of violence to the child protection authorities had been adopted in April 2024. The police, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, social service providers, and guardianship and trusteeship bodies were the entities primarily responsible for the protection of the rights of children living in difficult circumstances.

25. Family law, including laws on child protection, had been undergoing an overhaul in recent years. Once the bill on the rights of the child and the child protection system was signed into law, probably by the end of the year, all children would be entitled to protection from all forms of violence, including physical punishment. There was a cross-government commitment to ensuring that the prohibition of violence against children was enforced. Initiatives undertaken to that end included the delivery of parenting support programmes, the promotion of non-violent child-rearing models and the training of relevant specialists.

26. Data related to Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, had been collected in all parts of the country. Those data would inform the decisions made by the child protection and other authorities.

27. Many of the child protection policy documents that her Government had adopted in the past had pertained to children in situations of vulnerability. More recently, however, there had been a shift, and significant efforts had been made to promote and protect the rights of the child more broadly.

28. **A representative of Armenia** said that the provision of medical care in his country's correctional facilities had improved significantly in recent years. The Penitentiary Medical Centre, a non-commercial organization that was independent of the Penitentiary Service, had been founded in 2018 with a view to strengthening the independence and effectiveness of prison medical personnel. More recently, responsibility for the Centre, which provided medical services around the clock, had been transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Health. There were positions for nearly 200 staff members, of which 7 were currently unfilled, at the Centre. With the exception of some of the Centre's psychiatrists, its medical personnel worked full-time.

29. Medical examinations, at which non-medical prison personnel were ordinarily neither present nor within earshot, were to take place within 24 hours of a detainee's admission to a facility's quarantine department. The examination included a preliminary assessment of the detainee's mental health, and all signs and allegations of torture or ill-treatment were documented. By law, persons deprived of their liberty had the right to receive medical assistance. In addition, all such persons had the right to seek, at their own expense, the services of a medical doctor or healthcare facility of their choosing.

30. Inpatient treatment of prisoners with mental health problems was provided at a hospital for convicted prisoners. There was also a project aimed at arranging for detainees to receive such treatment at the National Centre for Mental Healthcare, which operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Health. A comprehensive range of gynaecological services was available to inmates at Abovyan Prison, the country's women's prison.

31. The law on reproductive health applied to all persons, deprived of their liberty or not. Rapid tests for all communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted infections, were

the norm. In the event of a positive result, samples were sent to a specialized centre for confirmation. Large-scale tuberculosis screening took place twice a year. In some cases, detainees were also given a chest X-ray upon being admitted to prison. In addition, prisoners had access to methadone substitution treatment and condoms.

32. A unified health information management system gave doctors and other healthcare personnel access to patient records. Some of the medical histories prepared at the Penitentiary Medical Centre had already been entered into the system. The Centre's full integration into the system was expected by late 2025.

33. Ongoing training, which included courses organized by the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan, the Office of the Human Rights Defender and other institutions, was offered to members of the Centre's medical personnel. The topics covered every year included documentation of signs of torture and ill-treatment, infection prevention, effective communication, conflict management, and stress and time management. Workshops for members of ambulance crews were also organized regularly.

34. **A representative of Armenia** said that a wide range of activities had been organized to raise awareness of the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment. In 2024, for example, posters had been printed for that purpose and put up in a number of official institutions. Short films had also been made.

35. Awareness-raising activities were also part of the Government's efforts to combat hate speech and hate crime, which were comprehensively addressed in the new Criminal Code. Training to help public officials ensure that those efforts were successful was provided for in the National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan. Digital hate speech had been defined as a specific type of cybercrime, and hate was an aggravating factor at sentencing. The promotion of discrimination in the media was prohibited.

36. A month-long awareness campaign focusing on hate speech had been launched earlier in the year. As part of that campaign, posters highlighting the adverse impact of hate speech had been put up in high-traffic public areas, including the Yerevan Metro System. Efforts to bolster the legal and institutional response to hate speech had included the production of educational videos on the prohibition of discrimination and the development of guidelines for the investigation of hate crimes. In addition, numerous training sessions on non-discrimination and equality had been organized for police officers, prosecutors and judges.

37. As part of the Government's continuing efforts to combat hate speech, discrimination and intolerance, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were working together to eliminate intolerance within government institutions. More than 500 police officers had participated in training with a view to preventing discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Evaluations completed by participants before and after the training had demonstrated its impact.

38. **Mr. Kessing** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know whether persons who were unable to apply for asylum within 15 days of arriving in Armenia were at risk of being expelled without any kind of assessment of their application having taken place. He wondered whether criminal proceedings had been initiated in any of the 67 cases in which disciplinary proceedings had been initiated against police officers in 2024. It would be useful to learn whether, in line with article 4 of the Convention, the State Party had taken any steps to increase the maximum penalty for that offence under the Criminal Code to more than 7 years.

39. He would be interested to know whether the delegation agreed with reports received by the Committee concerning the very slow pace of the inquiry that the Investigative Committee was conducting into the alleged excessive use of force by police officers during the protests of 2008. It would be helpful to hear whether the State Party was taking any steps to help expedite it and whether additional staff or resources were needed for that purpose. The delegation might explain whether the Investigative Committee was fully independent, both in law and in practice, from the police force.

40. It would be useful to learn whether the State Party had initiated any investigations into the alleged commission of war crimes against Azerbaijani soldiers and civilians during the recent armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He would welcome more

information about the national mechanism for reporting and following up on concluding observations that the State Party had recently established.

41. **Ms. Racu** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee had received reports concerning a lack of community services for psychiatric patients and deinstitutionalization mechanisms for children in social care homes, poor conditions at psychiatric and social care institutions, the use of physical restraints on residents and a failure to ensure that adults and children were housed in separate locations. She wished to know what steps were being taken to reform such institutions, improve the material conditions they provided and increase their staffing levels. She wondered whether there were any complaints mechanisms at such institutions, how many complaints about the treatment of residents had been received and what the outcomes of those complaints had been.

42. She would welcome more information about the conditions under which victims of torture could obtain redress. Updated statistics on the number of cases in which victims had been offered redress and compensation would be appreciated. The Committee would be interested to learn why compensation for non-pecuniary damages could be obtained only in cases in which the perpetrator had been identified and convicted. It would be helpful to hear what steps the Government would take to ensure that compensation was accessible to victims even in cases in which the perpetrators remained unidentified.

43. The delegation might comment on any measures that were being taken to enhance public oversight of the military with a view to addressing and preventing violence within its ranks, including hazing, and so-called non-statutory relations among servicemen. She wondered how the Government would ensure that the responsible military officials were held accountable for serious offences such as assaults and murders. It would be useful to learn what action had been taken to provide psychological support for soldiers, particularly with a view to preventing suicides and addressing mental health issues.

44. She would welcome more information on the new methodology that the Government was using to compile statistics on criminal investigations into domestic violence cases. She wished to know what steps were being taken to address remaining gaps in the reporting system, including with respect to remote and rural areas, and what shelter accommodations and psychological and other support was available to victims and survivors of domestic violence. She would be interested to learn when the Government planned to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and how it would go about integrating its provisions into its legal system.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5.05 p.m.

45. **A representative of Armenia** said that the credibility of investigations and the protection of individual rights during criminal proceedings had been strengthened through such amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code as the requirement for audiovisual recordings to be made during interrogations and appended to the relevant reports in order to ensure that those materials carried evidentiary weight. The division of the Investigative Committee that had been made responsible for investigating crimes involving torture and abuse committed by officials operated autonomously within the structure of the Investigative Committee; there were no material grounds for questioning its independence or the integrity of its work, which were supported by institutional measures designed to ensure objectivity in sensitive cases.

46. In December 2020, the Investigative Committee had initiated six criminal proceedings based on video footage that it had received from the Office of the Human Rights Defender and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The footage, which had been circulated on social media platforms, appeared to show Armenian-speaking individuals wearing Armenian uniforms torturing Azerbaijani servicemen. Although a comprehensive investigation into the videos had been undertaken, the individuals involved had not yet been identified and the pre-investigation phase was ongoing. The investigators had, however, received credible reports indicating that Azerbaijani armed forces had made use of Armenian uniforms that they had captured together with other military supplies during the conflict, which raised the possibility that the video footage could be inauthentic. Clearly defined procedures had been established for ensuring that returning prisoners of war were promptly

screened and questioned by investigative authorities with a view to determining the circumstances of their captivity and conduct during the conflict, while also enabling them to be reunited with their families at the earliest opportunity.

47. **A representative of Armenia** said that, while the Azerbaijani Government continued to hold Armenians captive in violation of its international obligations, there were currently no prisoners of Azerbaijani origin in Armenian custody, and all prisoners who had previously been held had been returned to Azerbaijan in full compliance with the humanitarian principle of “all for all”. The Armenian Government was seriously concerned by the continued detention, ill-treatment, torture and unlawful trials of Armenian detainees in Azerbaijan, their deteriorating health and credible reports of forced confessions and abuse. The closure of the office of ICRC in Azerbaijan had created a critical gap in protection for detainees that left them at immediate risk. Armenia had consistently proposed engaging in dialogue and cooperation on the issue of prisoners of war, hostages and missing persons, including through the establishment of joint commissions, and remained open to cooperation on all humanitarian issues. Since 2020, Armenia had documented 50 cases of enforced disappearance, many involving individuals last seen in Azerbaijani custody as evidenced by videos released by Azerbaijani military personnel and the testimony of repatriated Armenian prisoners of war. International human rights organizations had reported grave violations by Azerbaijani forces, including extrajudicial executions, torture and degrading treatment. In its report of 19 March 2021, Human Rights Watch had noted that a number of missing Armenian soldiers had last been seen in Azerbaijani custody and that it had been unable to account for them.

48. Following the large-scale attack by Azerbaijan against the sovereign territory of Armenia in September 2022, appalling evidence of war crimes committed against Armenian female military personnel had emerged, including video footage showing the mutilation of their bodies and acts of inhumane and degrading treatment, including sexual violence. Those atrocities had not only been recorded but also shared and widely circulated on Azerbaijani social media platforms, which had drawn strong condemnation from the international community and human rights organizations.

49. The abundance of such disturbing videos and the ease with which atrocities had been displayed suggested that such actions had at least implicitly been condoned by the authorities. Despite claims that criminal proceedings had been initiated, no perpetrators had been held accountable to date.

50. Armenia was in the process of establishing a mechanism for reporting to human rights bodies. That mechanism, whose mandate would include the coordination and supervision of efforts to implement human rights recommendations, would be a permanent, inclusive structure and would be composed of members of the judicial and legislative branches, the Human Rights Defender and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

51. **A representative of Armenia** said that the 15-day rule for asylum applications applied to cases where the person had crossed the border illegally, was subject to extradition or had committed an offence in Armenia prior to applying for asylum. It had been established in keeping with the provision of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees that persons present in the territory without authorization should present themselves to the authorities without delay. Applications filed after the 15-day mark were not considered, and the persons concerned were treated as foreign nationals, not as asylum-seekers. The relevant legislation had been developed in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs.

52. In 2024, 67 disciplinary proceedings had been initiated against police officers, of which 39 had been suspended because criminal cases had been brought in connection with the same incidents; the investigations in 27 of those cases had resulted in findings of no violation, while one case had led to the conviction and dismissal of three officers.

53. The duration of both types of restraining orders that could be issued in domestic violence cases had been increased, to up to 25 days for immediate intervention measures and to up to 12 months for protective measures.

54. **A representative of Armenia** said that efforts to combat gender stereotypes, violence against women and girls, and domestic violence were comprehensive and ongoing and were

carried out in close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental bodies, civil society and international partners. They included the provision of social assistance to individuals who experienced gender-based or domestic violence and the strengthening and expansion of available services. Those services, which were available to women, men, children, persons with disabilities and older persons, included one-time financial compensation, with the possibility of renewal; State-funded support centres, which were run by specially certified NGOs and provided a range of services on the basis of a needs assessment; and State-funded shelters.

55. The relevant legislation had been enacted in 2018 but had since been substantially amended. For example, the law was no longer focused only on prevention but also on the protection of victims; definitions and key concepts had been clarified and brought into line with the Criminal Code; the term “partner” had been introduced to refer to the person with whom the victim had a romantic relationship, irrespective of whether they lived together or engaged in sexual relations; persons who witnessed incidents of domestic violence, including children, were henceforth considered victims rather than indirect victims; the provisions on the reconciliation procedure had been repealed; victims were entitled to receive free medical assistance for health issues arising from the violence; and shelters now had to be accessible for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there was a council on the prevention of violence in the family which was headed by a Deputy Prime Minister and served as an advisory body on sectoral strategies, legislative changes and targeted actions. A system had recently been launched for recording cases of gender-based violence and generating disaggregated statistical data on such cases.

56. Gender-based violence prevention efforts would not be complete without awareness-raising and training for front-line personnel, in particular social service providers and healthcare practitioners. The number of professionals who received such training increased each year, and activities were stepped up during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, which included informal meetings with different target groups, especially women and girls living in rural areas, but also men. There were also campaigns to raise awareness among policymakers of the importance of the Istanbul Convention. In addition, an innovative mobile application had been rolled out with the aim of raising awareness and enabling people to report cases and obtain assistance.

57. In addition to the legislative reforms in the area of child protection already discussed, a new law on social protection had been adopted that promoted the economic empowerment of beneficiaries as a means of tackling extreme poverty, which was often at the root of the institutionalization of children. In that connection, a new vulnerability assessment system was being piloted in two regions of the country to better target support for families living in extreme poverty. Financial support was available for families who had three or more children, and eligibility for care allowances had recently been extended to all parents regardless of place of residence and employment status.

58. As a result of reforms and ongoing collaboration among the Government, international bodies and local organizations, the number of children in full-time institutional care had dropped from some 2,000 in 2014 to fewer than 400 by the end of 2024; most of the remaining children had severe disabilities. Comprehensive social support was being provided to facilitate the deinstitutionalization of children. Two residential facilities had been reorganized into support centres providing day-care and other services, including psychosocial support, parenting support and legal assistance, and the network of State-funded community-based services provided by certified NGOs had been expanding since 2020. In addition, there were three crisis centres providing temporary 24-hour care for children, and the foster care system was being actively promoted, leading to a considerable rise in the number of foster families and thus of children able to benefit from that form of care, including children with severe disabilities. Measures were also being taken to promote independent living for adults with disabilities and to improve the quality and oversight of the institutions that served those who continued to require residential institutional care.

59. **A representative of Armenia** said that the penalty for torture was 4 to 8 years’ imprisonment in ordinary cases, 7 to 12 years’ imprisonment in aggravated cases and 15 years’ imprisonment when committed in the context of organized crime, which Armenia considered to be in line with its international commitments. Redress for torture victims could

be sought only after criminal proceedings had ended, which also implied that the perpetrator had to have been identified.

60. The right to life and the prohibition of torture were among the priority topics in the Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan, whose coordinating council was composed of government authorities and civil society, met on a quarterly basis and issued reports every six months. The various national strategy papers had been developed taking into account the concluding observations issued by the treaty bodies.

61. A coordinated, multidisciplinary approach was taken to suicide and self-harm in the military that encompassed prevention, education, early detection and institutional accountability. Prevention groups carried out psychological profiling, assessed emotional and behavioural risks and intervened where signs of instability or deviant conduct were identified. Military psychologists used standardized diagnostic tools and conducted regular evaluations and resilience-building activities to prevent emotional burnout. In parallel, two-day training courses on the right to life and the prohibition of ill-treatment had been held for military personnel in cooperation with the Council of Europe. Videos on military discipline had been developed, and capacity-building for the military police command had been prioritized. About half of the military police command and 15 per cent of the armed forces command had taken the relevant training provided by the Ministry of Defence in cooperation with international partners. In addition, targeted training on mental health and suicide prevention for officer psychologists and the military high command had been developed in cooperation with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance; 40 per cent of officer psychologists had received the personalized training. Military prosecutors conducted regular inspections to prevent disciplinary violations and address risk factors within units.

62. The Armenian Government appreciated the Committee's thorough engagement throughout the dialogue, which served as a powerful reminder of their shared responsibility for upholding the absolute prohibition of torture everywhere and under all circumstances. Armenia was proud of the progress it had made in enhancing legal, institutional and procedural safeguards against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment as it sought not only to comply with its international obligations but also to entrench respect for human dignity and the rule of law in the justice system. It remained committed to monitoring the implementation of the newly adopted codes, continuing cooperation with civil society and international partners and addressing any gaps and challenges that might arise with resolve and integrity.

63. **The Chair** said that the Committee continued to work arduously, objectively and constructively to assist States Parties in implementing the Convention, despite the restrictions it was under as a result of the deep political and financial crisis gripping the multilateral system, and wished to acknowledge the State Party's commitment to overcoming the challenges arising from armed conflict.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.