



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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Human Rights Committee

Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of North Macedonia*

1. The Committee considered the fourth periodic report of North Macedonia¹ at its 4234th and 4235th meetings,² held on 30 June and 1 July 2025. At its 4254th meeting, held on 14 July, it adopted the present concluding observations.

A. Introduction

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

B. Positive aspects

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

- (a) The adoption of the Law on Free Legal Aid in 2019;
- (b) The adoption of the Law on Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination in 2020;
- (c) The adoption of the Law on Prevention of and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2021;
- (d) The adoption of amendments to the Law on Citizenship, in 2021, and other legislation aimed at ending statelessness and putting safeguards in place to prevent future cases of statelessness;
- (e) The adoption of the Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes in 2022;
- (f) The adoption of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma 2022–2030;
- (g) The preparation of the draft national strategy for prevention of and protection from gender-based violence against women and domestic violence (2026–2033);

* Adopted by the Committee at its 144th session (23 June–17 July 2025).

¹ [CCPR/C/MKD/4](#).

² See [CCPR/C/SR.4234](#) and [CCPR/C/SR.4235](#).

³ [CCPR/C/MKD/QPR/4](#).



(h) The publication of a manual on the submission of individual complaints to the Human Rights Committee, in 2022.

4. The Committee also welcomes the accession of the State Party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

Implementation of the Covenant and the Optional Protocol

5. Recalling its previous concluding observations,⁴ the Committee remains concerned about the absence of judicial decisions by the national courts invoking the Covenant during the reporting period. It notes that the low number of complaints received under the first Optional Protocol may indicate a lack of awareness of the Covenant and the Optional Protocol, despite the initiatives of the Ministry of Justice and the Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers to facilitate the submission of complaints (art. 2).

6. The State Party should take all steps necessary to increase awareness of the provisions of the Covenant and ensure its application by the national courts, including through regular training for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials. It should also continue raising awareness of the complaints procedure under the first Optional Protocol and establish mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Committee's future Views so as to guarantee the right to an effective remedy, as established in article 2 (3) of the Covenant.

National human rights institution

7. The Committee regrets that the Ombudsman's Office is still not fully compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), as it was accredited with B status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2011 and there has been no application for reaccreditation since. Furthermore, while it welcomes the designation of the Ombudsman's Office as the independent monitoring mechanism under article 33 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and as the National Rapporteur on Trafficking, the Committee regrets that these functions have not been adequately regulated in the legal framework. In particular, the Committee is concerned about the challenges posed by the lack of appropriate funding, which hinders the full and effective discharge of the Ombudsman's mandate (art. 2).

8. The State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure that the Ombudsman's Office fully complies with the Paris Principles and is able to carry out its mandate fully, effectively and independently. In particular, the State Party should intensify its efforts to adopt a legal framework governing all functions of the Ombudsman's Office and ensure that the Office has all the necessary resources to perform its functions.

Anti-corruption measures

9. The Committee notes the important measures taken to address corruption, including the work of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, as well as the plans to update the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest of 2019 and the Whistle-Blower Protection Law. However, the Committee is concerned the reported persistence of corruption, including in the judiciary and the prison administration, and the low number of criminal proceedings and convictions in corruption cases (arts. 2 and 25).

10. The State Party should:

(a) Redouble its efforts to investigate promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially all allegations of corruption at all levels, including in the judiciary and the prison administration, ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted,

⁴ CCPR/C/MKD/CO/3, para. 6.

are punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence, and provide redress to victims of corruption;

(b) **Strengthen the capacity of the police, prosecutors and judges to identify and address corruption effectively, including through the provision of appropriate and regular training;**

(c) **Expedite the planned adoption of the revised Whistle-Blower Protection Law and the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, ensuring that they are in full conformity with international standards;**

(d) **Implement awareness-raising campaigns to inform public officials, politicians, the business community and the general public about the economic and social costs of corruption and the mechanisms in place to report it.**

Non-discrimination and hate speech

11. The Committee welcomes the adoption in 2020 of the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination which has renewal and strengthening of the Commission for Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination, which can receive and review complaints of discrimination by public and private actors. However, it notes and regrets the underfunding of the Commission, which is operating with only a fifth of its required human resources (arts. 2 and 26).

12. **The State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure that the Commission for Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination is able to carry out its mandate fully, effectively and independently and, in particular, that it has all the necessary resources to perform its functions.**

13. The Committee welcomes the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation among the aggravating circumstances that qualify criminal acts as hate crimes and the initiative to revise the Criminal Code to establish a stand-alone offence of hate speech. However, it is concerned about the lack of clarity in the legal definition of hate speech, which is included as an aggravating factor in eight different offences, and about the low conviction rate for hate speech (arts. 2, 19, 20 and 26).

14. **The State Party should strengthen its efforts to combat hate speech and hate crimes, in particular against Roma and Muslims, by, inter alia:**

(a) **Ensuring that the definition of hate speech and hate crimes in the Criminal Code currently being amended complies with international standards and takes into account all prohibited grounds under the Covenant, including sexual orientation and gender identity;**

(b) **Ensuring that alleged hate crimes are thoroughly investigated, that suspected perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, are punished with penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence and that victims have access to full reparation;**

(c) **Taking effective measures to prevent and publicly condemn hate speech, in particular by public officials;**

(d) **Increasing the provision of special training to law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges on the identification and prosecution of hate speech and other forms of hate crimes;**

(e) **Conducting awareness-raising campaigns to promote a culture of respect for diversity and inform about channels for reporting hate crimes;**

(f) **Ensuring effective monitoring of hate speech and hate crimes through the systematic collection of data on related complaints and their outcomes.**

15. The Committee is also concerned about the reported anti-gender movements countrywide and by the continued absence of legal recognition and protection of same-sex couples (arts. 2, 17 and 26).

16. The State Party should:

- (a) Adopt or amend legislation with a view to ensuring the legal recognition of same-sex couples;**
- (b) Strengthen public awareness-raising campaigns to address social and cultural patterns and stereotypes that encourage and perpetuate gender inequalities.**

Rights of the Roma

17. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma 2022–2030 and the progress achieved in addressing school segregation, increasing employment of Roma women and improving the assignment of social housing. However, it reiterates its concern that members of the Roma community continue to experience significant discrimination and marginalization and high rates of poverty and exclusion, as reflected in their weaker outcomes in terms of education, employment, housing and health. The Committee remains concerned about reports that nationals of the State Party of Roma ethnicity, whose number is uncertain even for the Government, are still being arbitrarily denied the right to leave North Macedonia and by reports of ethnic profiling, particularly of Roma, at border-crossing controls. In addition, the Committee takes the view that there is lack of clarity regarding the Roma population living in North Macedonia, which hinders the production and analysis of disaggregated data and due attention to and respect for the human rights of this population (arts. 2, 22, 26 and 27).

18. The State Party should strengthen the measures to address discrimination and marginalization against the Roma community, including by:

- (a) Taking all measures necessary to ensure that no one is arbitrarily deprived of their right to leave the State Party's territory and that any allegation of ethnic profiling by border officials is promptly, thoroughly and independently investigated;**
- (b) Allocating sufficient resources to poverty-reduction measures targeting the Roma community, and designing such measures so as to ensure that they effectively reach all Roma persons living in poverty;**
- (c) Strengthening and expanding the provision of education to Roma children, the teaching of Roma language and culture in schools and special measures to increase the participation of the Roma community in public and political life, including measures aimed at enhancing Roma employment in public administration;**
- (d) Implementing awareness-raising campaigns in schools to address discrimination against the Roma community;**
- (e) Improving the census methodology to ensure the collection of fully disaggregated data on instances of discrimination, the enjoyment and exercise by the Roma population of their rights and the identification of the Roma population.**

Gender equality

19. The Committee welcomes the steady progress in increasing the participation of women in parliament and the introduction of gender quotas. However, it is concerned about the underrepresentation of women in all decision-making positions, such as mayorships and managerial positions. It is also concerned about the low representation of women from smaller ethnic minority groups in political and public life. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of progress since 2021 in advancing the legislative process for the adoption of a new law on gender equality (arts. 3 and 26).

20. The State Party should continue introducing measures to guarantee de jure and de facto equality between men and women. In particular, it should:

- (a) Strengthen its efforts to increase the representation of women, including women from all ethnic minority groups, in all spheres of society, including in positions not subject to quotas;**
- (b) Speed up efforts to adopt a law on gender equality that complies with the provisions of the Covenant and other relevant international standards.**

Violence against women, including domestic violence

21. Recalling its previous concluding observations,⁵ the Committee welcomes the notable steps taken to strengthen laws and policies for combating violence against women, in particular the amendments to the Criminal Code containing a definition of rape and sexual violence based on the absence of consent and the adoption of the Law on Prevention of and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Law on Free Legal Aid, which define victims of gender-based violence as a special category of beneficiaries. The Committee is nonetheless concerned about the reportedly high level of societal tolerance for and prevalence of gender-based violence and about reported gaps in implementation of current laws. In particular, the Committee is concerned that women involved in court proceedings are often unaware of their right to free legal aid, that temporary protection measures are often inefficient to prevent further victimization and that adolescent mothers who are victims of gender-based violence cannot stay in shelters. The Committee is further concerned about the prevalence of femicide, in particular of Roma women, and the low number of convictions for this offence. It is also concerned about the lack of recognition of other forms of violence, including psychological and online gender-based violence (arts. 2, 3, 6, 7 and 26).

22. The State Party should continue its efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, and ensure effective implementation of existing legislation. In particular, the State Party should:

- (a) **Ensure that all cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, are thoroughly investigated and that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, are punished with penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence;**
- (b) **Strengthen existing mechanisms to encourage women victims of violence to file complaints, including by ensuring that they are informed of their rights, and improve its system for collecting data on all cases of gender-based violence to evaluate the scope of the phenomenon and assess the effectiveness of the measures adopted to combat it;**
- (c) **Ensure that all victims, regardless of their age, have access to full reparations, effective means of protection and assistance, including free legal aid, shelters and psychosocial support;**
- (d) **Continue and expand the training of public officials, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officers, in identifying and handling cases of violence against women, including femicide and domestic, sexual and online violence;**
- (e) **Strengthen public awareness-raising campaigns to address social and cultural patterns and stereotypes that encourage and perpetuate gender-based violence.**

Voluntary termination of pregnancy and sexual and reproductive rights

23. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Law on Termination of Pregnancy in 2019, which removed obstacles to the voluntary termination of pregnancy. However, the Committee is concerned about the limited availability of medical termination of pregnancy outside Skopje, about the impact of this on women and girls in rural areas and about the fact that the cost of contraception and abortion, except in cases of medical necessity, must be covered by the patient (arts. 6, 7 and 26).

24. Bearing in mind paragraph 8 of the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life, the State Party should continue its efforts to guarantee safe, effective and affordable access to abortion for women and girls throughout the country.

Liberty and security of person

25. The Committee welcomes the increased use of alternatives to pretrial detention but is concerned about the excessive length of pretrial detention, which can last up to a year for offences that carry the penalty of 15 years' imprisonment and up to two years for offences

⁵ Ibid., para. 10.

that carry the penalty of life imprisonment. It is also concerned that individuals may be detained for up to 180 days during the investigation phase of criminal proceedings (art. 9).

26. Taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, the State Party should ensure that pretrial detention is applied only as an exceptional measure, for a limited period of time and on the basis of an assessment of individual circumstances and is subject to regular judicial review.

Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and excessive use of force

27. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Civil Control Mechanism within the Ombudsman's Office, which works with civil society organizations and has the capacity to carry out visits to places of detention, examine complaints of excessive use of force by police officers, provide legal support and issue early warning notices. The Committee also welcomes the increasing use of the opportunity to file complaints with the Civil Control Mechanism and the establishment of safeguards, such as the abolition of the statute of limitation in cases of excessive use of force, to enable the public prosecutor to investigate cases of excessive use of force by police officers. However, the Committee is concerned that most of the complaints to the Civil Control Mechanism have been dismissed as unfounded, that the State Party does not have a registry of injuries sustained in places of detention and that there is no data on complaints of excessive use of force disaggregated by the ethnic origin of the alleged victim (art. 6, 7 and 10).

28. The State Party should:

(a) **Conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of ill-treatment in custody, in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), and all allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers;**

(b) **Ensure that all complaints submitted to the Civil Control Mechanism of the Ombudsman's Office are carefully investigated and that all cases where the allegations may be well founded are referred to the prosecutor for the laying of criminal charges;**

(c) **Reinforce its oversight mechanisms to prevent and address cases of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers, ensure the prompt establishment of a registry of injuries sustained in places of detention and collect disaggregated data, including by ethnic origin, on complaints of excessive use of force or ill-treatment.**

Treatment of persons deprived of their liberty

29. The Committee is concerned about reports of severe overcrowding, understaffing and obsolete infrastructure in prisons, as well as corruption of prison staff who accept bribes for privileges or contraband, particularly at Idrizovo Prison. It notes the State Party's efforts to address overcrowding in prisons through increased use of alternatives to imprisonment, including probation and electronic monitoring using ankle bracelets, but is concerned that such measures may be insufficient given the magnitude of the problem. The Committee is also concerned about reports of lack of adequate access to food, drinking water, basic healthcare and education support services in places of detention, including in those for juveniles (art. 10).

30. The State Party should continue its efforts to improve conditions of detention and ensure that they are in full compliance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and other relevant international standards. It should, in particular:

(a) **Enhance the measures designed to end and prevent overcrowding, particularly through the wider application of alternatives to pretrial detention and non-custodial prison sentences, as provided for in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules);**

(b) **Intensify its efforts to improve the conditions of detention and ensure adequate access to food, drinking water, basic healthcare and education support services, including in places of detention for juveniles, including by renovating existing facilities.**

Elimination of slavery, servitude and trafficking in persons

31. The Committee welcomes the introduction of the principle whereby victims of trafficking in persons are not punished for offences they were forced to commit as a result of being trafficked, the granting of temporary residence for the period of recovery and reflection provided for in the 2018 Law on Foreigners, the adoption in 2022 of the Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes, and the creation of mobile teams comprising social workers, the police and civil society representatives for the identification of victims of trafficking in persons, which has led to an increase in identification of cases. However, the Committee is concerned about reports that the State Party remains a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in persons, especially women, most commonly for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, and that the capacity of the mobile teams is limited, especially given the magnitude of the problem. It remains concerned about the reports of involvement or complicity of public officials in the perpetration of the offence of trafficking and by the low rate of prosecution and conviction in trafficking cases (arts. 7, 8 and 26)

32. **The State Party should further strengthen its efforts to effectively prevent, combat and punish trafficking in persons, particularly for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, including by:**

(a) **Ensuring that perpetrators, including public officials, are effectively prosecuted and, if convicted, are punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence and that victims receive full reparation, including compensation;**

(b) **Enhancing identification of victims or potential victims, particularly among groups in situations of vulnerability;**

(c) **Ensuring that sufficient financial, technical and human resources are allocated to all institutions responsible for identifying, preventing and protecting persons from trafficking, including the mobile teams and State Commission on Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes;**

(d) **Increasing prevention and awareness-raising campaigns for the general public and specialized training for all relevant State officials, including the judiciary, the prosecution authorities, law enforcement personnel and border authorities, on standards and procedures for the prevention of trafficking, particularly for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, and for the identification and referral of victims and on the rights of victims.**

Treatment of aliens, including migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, and statelessness

33. The Committee has received reliable reports of the overall inadequacy of the asylum procedure, including limited access to free legal aid, the unregulated status of transit centres, and the absence of an integration framework. The Committee has also been informed of significant delays in the issuance of identification cards for asylum-seekers and that such documents are not machine-readable, which limits the ability to obtain entry and exit visas. The Committee is concerned by the fact that asylum-seekers still lack personal identification numbers, which restricts their access to the labour market, healthcare, education and social services. Furthermore, the Committee is deeply concerned by reports that asylum-seekers, including women and children, are detained at the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Gazi Baba, by the lack of access to legal assistance, by the absence of judicial review of detention decisions and by the limited use of alternatives to detention (arts. 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 24 and 26).

34. **The State Party should ensure that all persons seeking international protection have unfettered access to the national territory and to fair and efficient procedures for the individualized determination of refugee status or eligibility for international**

protection in order to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement. It should also ensure that its legislation is in full compliance with relevant requirements. In particular, it should ensure:

(a) **That the detention of migrants and asylum-seekers is used only as a measure of last resort and is reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the light of the individual's circumstances, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 35 (2014), that alternatives to detention are used in practice, that children are not deprived of their liberty for immigration-related purposes and that asylum-seekers and migrants have access to qualified legal aid when the interests of justice so require;**

(b) **That machine-readable identification cards and personal identification numbers are provided promptly to all asylum-seekers in order to protect their freedom of movement and enjoyment of other human rights.**

35. The Committee welcomes the State Party's accession to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the enactment of the Law on Citizenship on 8 August 2021, which addresses the statelessness caseload in relation to the former Yugoslavia, and the efforts undertaken to address the situation of persons lacking personal documents. However, the Committee is concerned that over 150 individuals reportedly continue to be identified as stateless, most of them Roma, and that, although the new civil registry law mandates immediate birth registration of every child regardless of the parents' legal status, instances of non-registration persist, particularly of children from the Roma community (arts. 2, 16, 24 and 26).

36. **The State Party should pursue its efforts to prevent and address statelessness, and ensure the immediate and systematic birth and civil registration of all children, including from the Roma community. It should also ensure that it provides birth certificates free-of-charge in hospitals before the mother is discharged, and aim to eliminate the root causes of the problem to ultimately ensure that all unregistered persons can have access to citizenship.**

Access to justice, independence of the judiciary and fair trial

37. The Committee welcomes the reforms to the justice system undertaken between 2017 and 2024 and the adoption of the development strategy for the justice system 2024–2028 but is concerned about the lack of transparency in the appointment and promotion of judges and the lack of reasoning of decisions in these matters. It therefore welcomes the bill on the Judicial Council, which introduces a merit-based procedure for the selection of judges. The Committee is, however, concerned about the long delays in the judicial review of administrative decisions and the lack of cooperation from the administration in such proceedings (arts. 2 and 14).

38. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Promptly adopt the bill on the Judicial Council, in line with the provisions of the Covenant and relevant international standards, thus ensuring that judges are selected on the basis of competency and independence criteria;**

(b) **Increase the budgetary resources allocated to the functioning of the courts to reduce the delays in judicial reviews;**

(c) **Ensure that the administration cooperates fully and in good faith in all judicial proceedings to which it is a party.**

Right to privacy

39. The Committee welcomes the legal reforms undertaken, such as the adoption of the laws on monitoring of communications and the operational and technical agency. However, it is concerned about the reported instances of unlawful surveillance, in particular the "target fortress" cases, and the fact that several individuals initially convicted have avoided accountability following the annulment of the first-instance proceedings and the expiry of the statute of limitations. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of information on remedies available to individuals subjected to surveillance by the authorities, the failure to

notify of individuals that they are under surveillance, even in cases where such notification would not jeopardize investigations, and reports that evidence obtained through unlawful means has been admitted in court on the grounds of public interest (arts. 14, 17 and 19).

40. The State Party should ensure that surveillance activities and any other interference with privacy are carried out in full compliance with article 17 of the Covenant and with the principles of legality, proportionality and necessity. In particular, it should ensure that:

- (a) Independent oversight mechanisms are in place, including independent and impartial judicial review of surveillance activity;**
- (b) Persons concerned are notified, where possible, of the surveillance to which they have been subjected and have access to effective remedies in cases of abuse;**
- (c) Evidence obtained unlawfully cannot be invoked against the accused if it undermines the fairness of the proceedings, and that the accused has the possibility to contest the evidence on those grounds.**

Freedom of conscience and religious belief

41. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the law on the legal status of churches, religious communities and religious groups to facilitate registration and allow civil oversight of this process. However, the Committee remains concerned about reports that the registration process remains slow and that smaller religious communities are not, in practice, invited to participate in public events on an equal footing with the five religious communities explicitly named in the Constitution (arts. 2, 18, 22 and 26).

42. The State Party should take appropriate measures to ensure that the laws and procedures governing the registration of religious groups are applied consistently, expeditiously and without discrimination and do not involve burdensome administrative requirements. In addition, it should guarantee that the principle of equal treatment of religions is respected in practice.

Freedom of expression

43. The Committee welcomes the amendment of the Criminal Code enabling the public prosecutor to prosecute offences against journalists ex officio and establishing aggravated forms of offences perpetrated against journalists. It also welcomes the decriminalization of the offence of defamation, which is now addressed under civil law. However, the Committee is concerned about the reported attacks against journalists, particularly investigative journalists reporting on corruption. The Committee is also concerned about allegations that several appointments to the Council of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services were politically motivated (art. 19).

44. The State Party should take all measures necessary to guarantee the full enjoyment of freedom of expression, in accordance with article 19 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. In particular, it should:

- (a) Prevent and combat all acts of harassment, intimidation and violence against journalists to ensure that they are free to carry out their work without undue control or interference, including fear of violence and reprisals;**
- (b) Ensure the independence of regulatory institutions, such as the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, including through the transparent and merit-based appointment of their members.**

Rights of the child

45. While welcoming the National Strategy for the Deinstitutionalization of Children and the prohibition of solitary confinement of children, contained in the amended law on sanctions enforcement of 2019, the Committee is concerned about reports of cases of ill-treatment of children, especially of Roma boys and of children with disabilities, at home, in institutions and in community-based care, about the high levels of child and forced

marriage, in particular among Roma girls, and about the low levels of social assistance for families with children, including children with disabilities (arts. 2, 7, 23, 24, 26 and 27).

46. The State Party should redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against children, particularly against Roma children and against children with disabilities, both at home and in public institutions. It should also:

(a) **Ensure that all allegations of any form of violence against or abuse of children, especially in institutionalized settings, are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated, that those responsible are brought to justice and that all victims have access to effective remedies and appropriate protection and assistance; and continue providing alternatives to the institutionalization of children;**

(b) **Take measures to prevent child and forced marriages, in particular by continuing outreach activities, especially among the Roma community.**

Participation in public affairs

47. The Committee welcomes the efforts made to facilitate access to voting rights for persons with disabilities, including through the use of Braille during voting and elections. However, it highlights the persistent barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing polling stations and their continued underrepresentation in elected positions. The Committee was made aware that the amendments to the Electoral Code adopted through a fast-track procedure in June 2025 caused electoral irregularities, including a significant increase in the number of signatures required for independent candidates to run. Furthermore, it notes the legal uncertainty with regard to the next elections that was created by the subsequent repeal of the amendments by the Constitutional Court. The Committee is also aware that a number of violations of the Electoral Code have been registered by the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (arts. 25 and 26).

48. In accordance with article 25 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 25 (1996) on participation in public affairs and the right to vote, the State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure the full and effective enjoyment and exercise of the right to participate in public affairs, including by aligning its electoral regulations and practices with the provisions of the Covenant and the general comment. In particular, it should:

(a) **Take measures to combat and prevent electoral irregularities, including undertaking prompt, thorough and independent investigations;**

(b) **Ensure that there are no unreasonable or discriminatory barriers to the right of every citizen to run for election;**

(c) **Ensure that all infrastructure for elections and participation in public affairs, including polling stations, is accessible to all, including persons with disabilities.**

Rights of minorities

49. The Committee welcomes the fact that opportunities are available to learn a second, locally recognized official language in schools in certain municipalities and the establishment of grants to support educational activities relating to the State Party's multi-ethnic society. However, the Committee is concerned about the persistent lack of adequate funding and staffing of bodies such as the Agency for Community Rights Realization. Moreover, it is aware of a lack of textbooks in several ethnic minority languages, the absence of effective monitoring mechanisms to assess the enjoyment and exercise of rights by the various ethnic communities and the low level of representation of minorities in elected bodies (arts. 25 and 27).

50. The State Party should step up its efforts to ensure the protection and recognition, both in law and in practice, of the rights of minorities. In this regard, it should:

(a) **Provide the Agency for Community Rights Realization with the financial and human resources necessary to carry out its functions effectively;**

(b) **Ensure the availability of textbooks in ethnic minority languages;**

(c) Strengthen its efforts to increase the representation of minority groups in elected and public decision-making bodies.

D. Dissemination and follow-up

51. The State Party should widely disseminate the Covenant, the two Optional Protocols thereto, its fourth periodic report and the present concluding observations, with a view to raising awareness of the rights enshrined in the Covenant among the judicial, legislative and administrative authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country and the general public. The State Party should ensure that the fourth periodic report and the present concluding observations are translated into the official language of the State Party.

52. In accordance with rule 75 (1) of the Committee's rules of procedure, the State Party is requested to provide, by 18 July 2028, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in paragraphs 26 (liberty and security of person), 34 (treatment of aliens, including migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, and statelessness) and 46 (rights of the child) above.

53. In line with the Committee's predictable review cycle, the State Party will receive in 2031 the Committee's list of issues prior to the submission of the report and will be expected to submit within one year its replies, which will constitute its fifth periodic report. The Committee requests the State Party, in preparing the report, to broadly consult civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. The next constructive dialogue with the State party will take place in Geneva in 2033.
