



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

Distr.: General  
19 August 2019

Original: English

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Ninety-ninth session

### Summary record of the 2749th meeting\*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 13 August 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Amir

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*Initial and second periodic reports of the State of Palestine*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 2748th meeting.

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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*)

*Initial and second periodic reports of the State of Palestine (CERD/C/PSE/1-2 and CERD/C/PSE/Q/1-2)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the State of Palestine took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chair** said that he welcomed the delegation of the State of Palestine and briefly reviewed the history of the State party and the suffering of its people since the early twentieth century, highlighting the importance of the right to self-determination and independence.
3. **Mr. Hijazi** (State of Palestine) said that the Palestinian people would continue to exercise their right to self-determination until they enjoyed all rights guaranteed under international law. Notwithstanding the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory in flagrant violation of international human rights law and humanitarian law, and notwithstanding the *Nakbah* of 1948, during which a huge number of people had been driven from their homes by armed violence, and as a result of which they were still living in refugee camps and deprived of their right of return, the Palestinian people were determined to maintain their national identity and heritage and to abide by humanitarian principles. The Palestine Liberation Organization, which served as their legitimate representative, had sought to build a society based on equality, justice and non-discrimination and a State based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Organization reasserted the right of the Palestinian people, wherever they might be, to enjoy their inalienable rights under the Convention, including the right of refugees to return to their homes. He drew attention in that connection to the Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the Palestinian National Council in 1988, which had been cited in paragraph 27 of the report.
4. Since acquiring observer status at the United Nations, the State of Palestine had acceded to a number of international treaties, including the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, the International Convention against Apartheid in Sports, the Convention against Discrimination in Education and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the amendments thereto concerning the crime of aggression. The State of Palestine had also acceded in 2019 to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.
5. He was pleased to announce that the State of Palestine had recognized the Committee's competence under article 14 of the Convention to receive and consider communications from individuals. It had also ratified the amendment to article 8 (6) of the Convention. The State of Palestine would continue to align its legislation, policies, procedures and services with international human rights norms.
6. The Committee affirmed in its general recommendation No. 19 on article 3 of the Convention that a condition of racial segregation could arise without any initiative or direct involvement by the public authorities, and it invited States parties to monitor all trends which could give rise to racial segregation, to work for the eradication of any negative consequences that ensued and to describe any such action in their periodic reports. The prolonged Israeli occupation clearly demonstrated that there was a close relationship between foreign occupation and the phenomena of discrimination and apartheid. The occupation contravened a whole series of human rights treaties and United Nations resolutions adopted by the

Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Furthermore, the International Court of Justice had ruled in an Advisory Opinion adopted in 2004 that the construction by Israel of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem, constituted a flagrant violation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination which, according to the Court, was an obligation *erga omnes*.

7. The human rights situation in the State of Palestine was deteriorating as a result of the ongoing grave violations by Israel of international law and its failure to comply with the norms enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and other international humanitarian and human rights norms. The Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, which were based on a theory of racial and religious superiority, were being expanded and Palestinians were being forcibly displaced. The settlers were also assuming control over natural resources, including land and water. The crimes perpetrated against Palestinians included killing, wounding, deprivation of liberty and arbitrary detention, including of children. There were currently about 6,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, and they were subjected to torture and to cruel and inhuman treatment. A blockade had been imposed on the Gaza Strip. Freedom of movement was impeded by the discriminatory permit system and roadblocks. Homes were demolished and the residents were forcibly evacuated, most recently in Sur Bahir in East Jerusalem, and land was confiscated and transferred to settlers. Racist laws and policies also deprived Palestinians of means of redress and promoted apartheid and discrimination. The basic aim of such oppression was to persuade Palestinian residents to leave Palestine, thereby promoting ethnic cleansing.

8. The law entitled “Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People” that had recently been enacted by Israel was entirely incompatible with international humanitarian law, which prohibited the annexation of territory and the forcible imposition of a constitutional identity on residents.

9. Paragraph 23 of the Committee’s general recommendation No. 32 on the meaning and scope of special measures in the Convention required States parties to provide protection from human rights violations emanating from any source, including foreign occupation. The State of Palestine sought to guarantee protection for its people at the national and international levels against violations of their rights by the occupying Power, for instance through recourse to competent international bodies. On 23 April 2018, the State of Palestine had submitted a communication to the Committee, pursuant to articles 11 to 13 of the Convention, concerning the failure of Israel to give effect to the provisions of the Convention in the State of Palestine. It hoped that the Committee would assess the complaints contained in the communication.

10. The State of Palestine also regularly sought the assistance of competent international bodies in compelling Israel to stop its violations. For example, it urged the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to condemn the violations and to hold the perpetrators accountable, and it called on States parties to the Geneva Conventions to shoulder their responsibility to guarantee respect for the Conventions in the occupied State of Palestine. On 22 May 2018, the State of Palestine had referred the situation in Palestine for investigation to the International Criminal Court.

11. At the national level, the State of Palestine took vigorous action to guarantee a decent life for all its citizens and specifically for victims of Israeli violations. The Government sought to ensure that the legislation guaranteed access to means of redress, for instance through individual communications under article 14 of the Convention. The Palestinian National Commission for International Humanitarian Law established pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 2 of 2016 had produced the preliminary draft of a national law on international crimes and violations of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

12. The Central Bureau of Statistics had conducted a survey in late 2018 on citizens’ experiences of discrimination. According to the results, which would be updated in the years ahead, 10.5 per cent of citizens (11.6 per cent for males and 9.2 per cent for females) had been subjected to some form of discrimination. The figure for the West Bank had been 8.0 per cent and that for the Gaza Strip 14.5 per cent. Discrimination on the ground of political

affiliation or ideas was the most widespread, at 5.4 per cent. It was followed by discrimination on the grounds of one's socioeconomic situation, at 4.5 per cent, gender discrimination, at 2.8 per cent and discrimination on grounds of colour, at 0.5 per cent.

13. In early July 2019, a technical committee tasked with reviewing the legislation governing personal and civil status, which had been established on 5 March 2019, had started work on a plan of action to align the national legislation with international standards.

14. In the area of education, the school curricula had been updated. The results of a study on school textbooks had shown that their content was in line with international standards in terms of promoting tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion, race or gender. Legislation had also been passed to ensure that every citizen had the right to higher education, without discrimination.

15. The Council of Ministers had issued a number of decisions to amend legislation to remove discriminatory provisions. For example, the Jordanian Penal Code of 1960, which was applicable in the West Bank, had been modified to prevent mitigating circumstances from being applied to crimes against women and girls, and the committee for harmonizing legislation was reviewing laws to assess their compliance with international obligations, in particular the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 15 on article 4 of the Convention. The committee for harmonizing legislation had already recommended changes to a law on cybercrime, and the law had now been revised to strike a better balance between preventing and punishing hate speech online and safeguarding the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

16. The 2017–2022 National Policy Agenda contained measures to uphold the principles of pluralism, equality and non-discrimination. It also sought to foster sustainable development, improve conditions in deprived areas and ensure access to basic services without discrimination. Social empowerment programmes were also being put in place with the aim of lifting disadvantaged groups out of poverty and improving the social welfare system.

17. The State of Palestine was committed to creating the necessary environment to guarantee for its citizens the full enjoyment of their human rights. Despite the presence of the occupying Power, which committed acts of aggression and perpetrated human rights violations to maintain its colonial occupation, the State of Palestine continued in the struggle to recover its rights to self-determination, independence and freedom and to protect its national, cultural and spiritual identity in a free homeland, for a free people.

18. **Mr. Younis** (State of Palestine) said that, as the national human rights institution of the State of Palestine, the Independent Commission for Human Rights, which he represented, enjoyed category A status under the Paris Principles and was responsible for protecting and promoting human rights, monitoring the conduct of State institutions and the implementation of legislation, and addressing complaints of human rights violations.

19. It was impossible to speak about racial discrimination in the State of Palestine without acknowledging the history behind its current reality. Palestinians lived under the yoke of colonial occupation. The occupying Power had implemented racially discriminatory laws and policies, established an apartheid regime, committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Palestinian people, and ignored the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The situation had seriously affected the capacity of Palestinian institutions to honour the State's obligations under the Convention and to protect the most vulnerable groups of society, who were the victims of systematic racial discrimination carried out by the occupier.

20. Despite all obstacles, efforts were being made to implement the Convention, which had primacy over national legislation. However, although the State of Palestine had acceded to the Convention without entering any reservations, there were concerns that a Supreme Constitutional Court decision of 2017 had imposed restrictions on the implementation of human rights conventions. In addition, steps must be taken to align Palestinian legislation with the Convention, including by establishing a comprehensive definition of racial

discrimination, and to combat the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by vulnerable groups living in certain parts of the country.

21. The Gaza Strip was under the de facto administration of Hamas, while some 60 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was controlled by Israel. However, the combined initial and second periodic report of the State of Palestine did not refer to any measures aimed at implementing the Convention throughout the entire territory. Nevertheless, he was encouraged that there was clear political will to honour the State's obligations under the Convention. He urged the State to redouble its efforts in that regard.

22. **Ms. Chung** (Country Rapporteur) said that the continuous Israeli occupation and the division between the Government of national consensus based in Ramallah and the de facto administration of the Gaza Strip by Hamas had made it difficult to ensure uniform application of the Convention. She wondered what measures had been taken or were envisaged to implement the Convention and domestic legislation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It was true that, according to various United Nations resolutions, the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were in violation of international law and represented an obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights by the whole population, irrespective of national or ethnic origin. However, for the purposes of reviewing the State party's implementation of the Convention, it was necessary to address reports of various human rights issues that had arisen within the Palestinian population itself.

23. It would be helpful if the State party could submit a common core document to enable the Committee to gain a more comprehensive overview of the country. Up-to-date data on the demographic composition of the population, disaggregated by racial, ethnic or national origin, should also be provided, in line with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Committee's list of themes (CERD/C/PSE/Q/1-2). What practical steps had been taken to collect accurate and comprehensive statistics on the groups that were protected by the Convention?

24. She would like to know what measures had been taken to establish a comprehensive definition of racial discrimination in line with article 1 of the Convention, and to ensure that the Palestinian Declaration of Independence of 1988, the Amended Basic Law of 2003 and the various penal codes in force in the country were all in full compliance with the Convention. The meaning and implications of Supreme Constitutional Court Decision No. 4 (2017) of 19 November 2017, in which it was stated that international conventions took precedence over national law only insofar as they were consistent with the national, religious and cultural identity of the Palestinian people, should be explained. The delegation should also comment on reports that Palestinian legislation, including Presidential Decree No. 3 of 1998, concerning the strengthening of national unity, was not being used in practice to implement article 2 of the Convention.

25. She would like to know that steps were being taken to harmonize the various sets of laws that were applied in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in order to ensure that all persons living under the State party's jurisdiction had equal protection under the law, and what efforts were being made to amend or repeal discriminatory laws. She would welcome information on the implementation in practice of legislative provisions that prohibited the promotion of racial hatred or discrimination in any form, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention.

26. With regard to access to justice, she would be interested to know how many complaints of racial discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech had been lodged in the reporting period and how many of those complaints had led to investigations, prosecutions and convictions. She wished to know what measures had been taken to raise public awareness of the rights under the Convention and of the complaint mechanisms available for asserting those rights, and what resources had been allocated to the Independent Commission for Human Rights to enable it to fulfil its mandate in an independent and transparent manner. Information on the status of the National Legal Aid Commission and the bill establishing a legal aid fund for victims of racial discrimination would also be welcome.

27. She invited the delegation to explain why so few shadow reports had been received from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in the State party. She would welcome detailed information on the situation of the racial, ethnic, religious and national minorities that were referred to in the Committee's list of themes (CERD/C/PSE/Q/1-2, para. 13) and the State party's report (CERD/C/PSE/1-2, paras. 25–26 and 162) and any other groups who

were living in the State party's territory. The delegation should also comment on reports of the use of arbitrary arrests, detention and torture in the conflict between the authorities of the State of Palestine and Hamas, provide disaggregated data on the victims of alleged human rights violations and respond to allegations that members of some ethnic groups had come into conflict with other Palestinians owing to their suspected cooperation with the Israeli army.

28. She wished to know what action the State party was taking to: improve the difficult living conditions of Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons; unify the complex set of laws on nationality in order to reduce the risk of statelessness; prevent the loss of citizenship of persons affected by prolonged refugee status abroad; and address the discriminatory citizenship laws that were applied in the occupied territories, in particular in East Jerusalem. She would also like to know how the State party ensured that non-citizens enjoyed the rights provided for under the Convention, without discrimination; whether the application of the Palestinian Labour Code had been extended to migrant domestic workers and informal workers to protect them from abusive practices; and how the State party intended to gather statistics on the number of foreign workers in the country. The Committee would be interested to know the extent to which human trafficking occurred in the State party and any legislative measures that had been taken to address the problem. Details of trafficking-related complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions and on the measures of redress and rehabilitation for trafficking victims would also be appreciated.

29. She asked what measures had been taken to eliminate the pervasiveness of certain harmful traditional practices, such as honour killings and child marriage. The delegation should comment on allegations that anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli sentiment and incitement to hatred and violence appeared in the media, school curricula and speeches by State officials. How did the State party raise awareness of the negative effects of racial discrimination and promote tolerance and understanding, in particular in the school curricula?

30. Lastly, she would be interested to know what the results of the National Strategic Plan for Culture 2014–2016 had been and whether the State party had developed a national action plan to improve the human rights situation in its territory.

31. **Mr. Kut** said that he wished to point out to the authorities of the State of Palestine, as a new State party to the Convention, that the Committee attached particular importance to its procedure for follow-up to concluding observations. He provided a short description of the procedure and the applicable timelines, stressing that timely interim reporting on a few select topics identified for follow-up was a useful indication of a State's political will and capacity to implement the Committee's recommendations.

32. **Ms. Shepherd** said that the Committee was grateful for the extensive information that the State party had provided on its policy and legislative frameworks for education in response to the Committee's concerns regarding the use of education to combat prejudices and to promote understanding. While such legislative and policy measures were certainly laudable, it would be helpful for the Committee to obtain specific information about the way in which they had affected education in practice. The Committee was aware of the challenges the State party was facing when it came to the collection of data on school attendance. However, it was crucial to have statistics disaggregated by age, gender and ethnic group concerning dropout rates and barriers to accessing free education in order to assess the impact of laws and policies.

33. It would be useful for the Committee to learn more about the way in which curricula and textbooks facilitated the promotion of the values of non-discrimination, respect, tolerance and human rights. Could the delegation describe how young Palestinians were taught to respect their identity and take pride in their culture without discriminating against other cultures? Apparently, each ethnic group followed a specific curriculum. The Committee would like to learn more about the basic unifying elements of the curricula and of the education system as a whole. The delegation might wish to share its views on reports suggesting that the State party's education system did not conform to international standards when it came to promoting peace, tolerance and reconciliation.

34. It would be useful to find out how education was used to bolster the Culture for All programme, in particular when it came to the development of citizenship based on pluralism

and respect for the values of equality. The State party had indicated that citizens' cultural rights were guaranteed by law, without discrimination. Apparently, though, the various ethnic groups exercised their cultural rights in "silos". Could the delegation describe the way in which cultural policies facilitated the acquisition of knowledge of all cultures, not just one's own, and thus contributed to cohesion of the State party's pluralistic society?

35. **Mr. Avtonomov** said that he was grateful for the information provided on the State party's Roma population. He would appreciate it if the delegation would provide further details on Roma children's access to education and specific educational support provided for them, as required. It would also be interesting to learn more about the Circassians living in the State party. In the light of the wealth of cultural policies adopted by the authorities, the delegation might wish to furnish additional information on minority language teaching and the extent to which the State supported minorities directly in the preservation of their culture.

36. Did the State party cooperate with the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the fight against racial discrimination? The Committee would also appreciate information about the measures taken to promote the rights of persons of African descent in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent. It would be helpful to receive updated information on the State party's plans to make a declaration under article 14 of the Convention.

37. **Mr. Bossuyt** said that it was somewhat unfortunate that the State party purported in its report to "shed light on the policies of the Israeli colonial occupation and its grave and massive violations of international law and norms" and to address "the issue of the racial discrimination perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people". The State party's situation at the heart of one of the most complex conflicts in the world posed an exceptional challenge for the Committee. The Palestinian people suffered grave injustice and hardship, but it would be unfair to attribute the responsibility for such a protracted conflict to only one of its protagonists. Clear-headedness, courage and sacrifice were needed on both sides in order to find a solution. As a body of experts at the service of international human rights law, the Committee must avoid instrumentalization and steer clear of political opportunism.

38. The periodic report provided useful information on the historic context of racial discrimination and the ethnic composition of the State party's population. However, section II, relating to articles 1 to 7 of the Convention, while giving a good overview of relevant domestic legislation, offered very little information on implementation. Instead of describing the State party's own practices in regard to the rights set forth in the Convention, a detailed account was given of the practices of the occupying Power, Israel. Although the occupation by Israel of part of the State party's territory posed serious problems in terms of the Convention, a State party report should concern itself with the practices of the reporting State, not those of another country. The fact that nearly one-third of the report related to the conduct of another State undermined the Committee's ability to gain an effective understanding of the State party's own efforts to implement the Convention. In addition, the State party's report exceeded the page limit for treaty-specific documents set forth in the relevant guidelines.

39. It would be helpful if the delegation would provide data on the size of the territories occupied by Israel, as compared with the territory under the effective control of the State party. The report did not distinguish between the level of control exercised by the State party in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, despite the fact that there was a difference. Did that circumstance not affect the State's ability to implement the Convention?

40. Collective punishment, such as the punitive demolition by Israel of the homes of Palestinian families suspected of participating in anti-occupation activities, amounted to a violation of the Geneva Conventions. Yet some of the anti-occupation activities themselves arguably also contravened those instruments and international human rights law. How did the State party respond to such activities when they amounted to violations of international law?

41. The Committee was pleased to learn of the State party's intention to make a declaration under article 14 of the Convention and thus recognize the Committee's competence to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of

individuals claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention. It might nevertheless be useful to recall that the Committee would only have jurisdiction over individual communications concerning violations committed by the State of Palestine, and not those committed on Palestinian territory by another State if that State had not made the declaration under article 14.

42. **Ms. Izsák-Ndiaye** said that it would be useful to know specifically which racial and ethnic groups were represented by the entities that had cooperated in the preparation of the State party report. It would also be helpful if the delegation would indicate how the State party intended to address the challenges to data collection described in the report. Might a national census be a feasible solution? With regard to the State party's assertion that the groups protected under the Convention were not considered minorities in the Palestinian legal system, as they were part of the Palestinian "whole", she pointed out that the word "minority" was not a derogatory term. In the context of the Convention, minorities were groups with a specific ethnic, linguistic or religious affiliation which they wished to preserve and promote. As such, minorities were a societal asset. The Committee required some clarification about the racial, ethnic and national groups inhabiting in the State party. Could the delegation explain the rationale for not including Bedouin communities in the groups listed in paragraph 25 of the report and the reasons why only a small number of those groups had formed associations?

43. Additional information was needed about the legal definition of racial discrimination in the State party and whether it was in conformity with the definition contained in article 1 of the Convention. Some racial and ethnic groups reportedly tended to pursue certain lines of work because of cultural specificities and geographic location, but that situation might also reflect discrimination in employment. The delegation might also wish to elaborate on legislation governing personal status, inheritance and succession. Since that legislation derived from the principles of the Islamic sharia, it might entail discrimination on grounds of gender or religious affiliation. Had any complaints been brought in that regard?

44. Was it true that the temporary special measures applied to ensure equal political participation, such as the seat reserved for Syriacs in Bethlehem municipality and the right for Samaritans to stand as candidates for the Palestinian Legislative Council, had been discontinued? If so, the delegation might wish to elaborate on the reasons for doing so and indicate whether the State party planned to implement any other actions to promote equal participation. Did the State party have a quota system in education? It would be useful for the Committee to know whether any cultural centres and public libraries had been established in remote and marginalized areas, as called for in Cabinet Decision No. 227 of 2004 on increasing cultural awareness among the most culturally disadvantaged social groups. It would also be interesting to find out how the different ethnic groups learned about each other's cultures and not only about their own cultural heritage. Were there any community media initiatives to enable broadcasting in minority languages and, if so, did they receive any State funding?

*The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.20 p.m.*

45. **Ms. McDougall** said that she welcomed the information provided by the State party, which had included an impressive list of laws that had been promulgated. Given the complex political situation, the multiplicity of jurisdictions in the State party and the lack of a functioning legislature, she wished to know what kind of legislative process could lead to the implementation of those laws. She also wished to know to whom the laws were applicable. Were they intended to apply to people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and also to Arabs living in unincorporated areas? She wondered whether their implementation was achievable in such places. Had the laws mentioned by the State party been published in the Official Gazette, and what would be the next step to ensure their implementation? How many of those laws had gone through the full process that was required for them to enter into force and subsequently be implemented? The delegation was requested to specify what system was in place to apply those laws in the judiciary. Lastly, she wondered whether enabling legislation was required to apply international treaties, and if so, whether an act had been adopted for the application of the Convention.



46. **Mr. Albuquerque e Silva** said that the consideration of the initial report of the State of Palestine was a historic moment for the Committee. He had been pleased to participate in a meeting with NGOs from the State of Palestine and Israel and had been struck by the highly respectful dialogue that had taken place between them, despite their differences of opinion. The constructive and civil spirit that had prevailed bore witness to the possibility of coexistence.

47. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, attending a recent Holocaust remembrance ceremony in New York, had warned that anti-Semitism was tormenting new generations around the world. The situation in the Middle East was often used as a pretext for anti-Semitism, with anti-Semitic sentiment rising whenever tensions mounted. The Committee had received worrying information regarding anti-Semitic content in school textbooks in the State of Palestine. He asked what measures were being taken by the State party to use education as a tool for understanding and overcoming the causes, consequences and evils of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Committee's jurisprudence was consistent in calling on States parties to review their curricula and textbooks to eliminate any elements that might fuel racism, on the understanding that racism was not innate, but motivated by local political situations. Children and adolescents were impressionable and could be taught the principles of tolerance and mutual respect. He would be interested to see examples of textbook reviews that had led to the removal of anti-Semitic references and discriminatory language.

48. **Ms. Dah** said that she agreed that the first dialogue with a delegation from the State of Palestine constituted a historic day in the work of the Committee. She too called upon the State party to prepare a common core document for submission to the treaty bodies to set out for them its history, population, human rights legislation and political information, thereby providing the treaty bodies with the institutional information required to understand how the State party legislated and applied its laws. She wished to see statistics on the number of cases of hate speech that had been reported and investigated and the number of convictions and sentences subsequently handed down. The Committee hoped that the Independent Commission for Human Rights would continue to be funded and given the necessary means to function effectively and receive complaints, and thereby retain its category A status as a national human rights institution established in compliance with the Paris Principles.

49. She would appreciate it if the delegation could provide some clarification on matters related to racist discourse. On the one hand, the State party stated that no racist discourse had been detected in Palestinian society, while on the other, it stated that complaints tended not to be lodged by victims of racist discourse, owing to fear and a lack of awareness of their rights. She asked what measures the State party intended to take to raise public awareness of what constituted racial discrimination, rights with regard to protection against such discrimination, and means of pursuing legal remedies and seeking reparation in the event of violations of those rights. Would measures be taken to ensure that the Complaints Department at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs was adequately equipped to receive complaints?

50. On the question of citizenship, she asked whether the multiplicity of legislation in place governing the conditions for acquisition of citizenship would be unified and whether steps were being taken to overcome the problems related to the withdrawal of citizenship. The Committee would appreciate it if the delegation could provide statistics about the acquisition and withdrawal of citizenship. Lastly, she asked whether the State party had any available statistics on cases of trafficking in persons and forced labour and whether any guarantees were in place to ensure reparation and rehabilitation for victims of such practices.

51. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know what measures were in place to prevent the withdrawal of citizenship from Palestinians, and thereby protect them against becoming stateless in the event that they lost their international protection or did not acquire the citizenship of a second country. He also asked whether the State party intended to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. What measures were in place to prevent hate speech, and did those measures extend to preventing the use of social media and other online forums for the dissemination of racial hatred? He wished to know what was being done to ensure protection for human rights defenders and whether there was a legislative

framework in place for that purpose. He also asked whether respect for the Convention was encouraged in areas where the State of Palestine did not have full sovereignty.

52. **Ms. Mohamed** said that she would like to know whether those who facilitated underage marriage were punished and whether there were any cases of interfaith marriage. She also asked what measures were in place to protect migrant workers and whether their working hours were limited. How were domestic workers protected against physical or verbal abuse? She wished to know whether there were any specialized NGOs dedicated to dealing with racial discrimination and how such organizations cooperated with the authorities.

53. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** said that he would like to know why there was a dearth of civil society organizations working on matters related to racial discrimination. The State party clearly faced challenges in its development. He wished to know what its prospects were for meeting any of the Sustainable Development Goals, and whether it had already made any progress towards achieving them.

54. **Mr. Hijazi** (State of Palestine) said that he wished to thank the Committee for its questions. While the information provided by the State of Palestine included aspects related to the Israeli occupation, the Government of Palestine did not intend to instrumentalize or politicize its discussion with the Committee. He was disappointed to note that certain bodies which intended to undermine the integrity of the United Nations and its institutions had provided the Committee with false information regarding the State of Palestine. The State of Palestine did not discriminate against its citizens. It was rather seeking a means of formulating and implementing laws in order to protect the Palestinian social fabric. That was a daunting prospect, given that half of the population had fled the country to escape oppression by a third party.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*