



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General  
22 August 2025

Original: English

---

## Human Rights Committee 144th session

### Summary record of the 4236th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 1 July 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Soh

## Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 40 of the Covenant  
(*continued*)

*Fourth periodic report of Latvia*

---

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](mailto: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 40 of the Covenant**  
(continued)

*Fourth periodic report of Latvia (CCPR/C/LVA/4; CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4; CCPR/C/LVA/RQ/4)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Latvia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Latvia**, introducing his country's periodic report (CCPR/C/LVA/4), said it was impossible to ignore that, since 2008, Russia had invaded two of the countries that, like his own, were on its borders. As a result, his country, as the European Court of Human Rights had noted in a recent judgment, increasingly had legitimate reasons to fear for its security, territorial integrity and democratic order. Against that backdrop and in the face of information and hybrid warfare operations, Latvia had strengthened its efforts to defend its national security and effectively safeguard the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Covenant.
3. Under the Constitution, the international legal instruments by which his country was bound formed an integral part of the domestic legal system. On several occasions, in fact, the courts had referred to the Committee's general comments or its Views.
4. Measures taken to strengthen the justice system in recent years had included the steady increase in the financial resources allocated to the courts. The Academy of Justice, a new institution for the professional development of judicial officials, had been established in 2024. Since then, hundreds of participants had attended its training sessions, which covered a wide range of topics.
5. The Office of the Ombudsman, which had consistently been awarded category A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, continued to operate in accordance with the highest relevant standards. In 2024, the authorities had implemented 194 recommendations made by the Office, considerably more than in 2022 and 2023. In the wake of his country's 2022 ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Office had been designated the national mechanism for the prevention of torture. More recently, a new department, the Department for Prevention of Discrimination, had been created at the Office, which had been allocated additional resources to ensure that the new responsibilities did not adversely affect its other work.
6. His country had, in addition, continued to support the naturalization of its non-citizen residents, who were not stateless, as they had the right to reside in Latvia, as well as rights and obligations that extended beyond those prescribed by the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. To facilitate naturalization, information days were organized, tools had been developed to help people prepare for their citizenship and Latvian language proficiency exams, and a law under which all children born to non-citizen residents acquired Latvian citizenship at birth had been adopted. Consequently, the number of non-citizen residents had fallen to around 174,000 in 2025, down from approximately 213,000 in 2020.
7. Gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence had been made public priorities. The gender pay gap had narrowed by 2.5 percentage points since 2023, and the percentage of women in senior positions in the public sector was well above the average of the States members of the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Latvia took top spots in other international gender-equality rankings as well. Its three priorities in relation to gender equality were, first, to ensure equal rights and opportunities in the labour market and education; second, to combat negative gender stereotypes; and third, to integrate gender equality into policy planning.
8. Legal protections had been strengthened with a view to combating gender-based violence. At the same time, victim support services had been expanded, and more campaigns to challenge the social norms that perpetuated violence had been organized. In November 2023, his country had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The National Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic

Violence 2024–2029, the country’s first such plan, had been put in place shortly thereafter. The penalties for threats of violence, violence and sexual offences when the victim was related or otherwise close to the perpetrator had been stiffened pursuant to legislative amendments adopted in 2024. Other amendments adopted in 2024 had enhanced the ability of the authorities to enforce compliance with restraining orders. In addition, workshops and discussions for young people on how to build non-violent relationships had been held and a violence prevention helpline had been set up.

9. Legislation on civil partnerships, under which both same- and opposite-sex couples could register their partnership, had been adopted in 2024, in response to a 2020 ruling in which the Constitutional Court had held that the article of the Constitution under which family life was to be protected did not apply solely to traditionally constituted families. As a result of the legislation, hundreds of civil partnerships, including same-sex partnerships, had been registered.

10. In 2021, social hatred, including hatred based on sexual orientation, had been made a motivating factor that aggravated the severity of a crime. Three years later, harsher punishment for some forms of incitement to social hatred or enmity had been introduced. Since then, no one who, for example, was found guilty of incitement to social hatred as part of an organized effort would be given a mere fine or simply sentenced to community service. Judicial officials regularly took part in training sessions on the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

11. **Mr. Helfer** said that, although it was regrettable that no civil society organizations from the State Party had met with the Committee in person or online, the documents provided by the State Party and the opening statement made by the head of the delegation contained a broad range of relevant information.

12. In connection with the State Party’s commendable commitment to the Covenant and the first Optional Protocol thereto, he wished to know how the Committee’s Views fitted into the national legal framework, in particular whether they were considered binding or mere recommendations, and whether there were impediments preventing the State Party from giving full effect to the Committee’s Views. He wished to know, too, whether police officers and members of the armed forces took part in human rights training or awareness-raising sessions. In addition, he wondered what steps had been taken to inform the public, including people who did not read Latvian or English, of their rights under the Covenant and the first Optional Protocol.

13. He would welcome an update on the application of the recently adopted law on the national preventive mechanism, as well as an update on the status of the recent bill in which changes to the process of nominating candidates for the position of Ombudsman were proposed. It would be helpful to learn, moreover, whether any further amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman had been proposed – to establish a constitutional basis for the Office, for example, or to protect the Ombudsman from civil or criminal liability. A description of the activities of the Office’s Department for Prevention of Discrimination would likewise be helpful.

14. The action taken by the Government in follow-up to 194 of the Office’s recommendations was welcome, but he would be interested to know which of its recommendations had not been acted on and why not. He wished to know, too, whether the State Party would consider putting in place a procedure to provide regular updates to the Office on the status of all its recommendations.

15. He wondered what mechanisms were in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken to combat corruption and how the findings of performance monitoring and internal audits were used to close enforcement and other gaps. He also wondered what enforcement action had been taken under the code of conduct for judges adopted in 2021 and whether any additional measures to prevent undue political influence over the courts were planned. The delegation might provide more detailed information concerning prosecutions for corruption involving senior public officials and members of the judiciary and explain what measures had been taken to ensure the integrity of politically significant prosecutions. In addition, it would be useful to learn what steps were being taken to ensure that the Bureau for the Combating and Prevention of Corruption played its intended role, as the centralized

anti-corruption authority, and what guarantees of the Bureau's independence there were. It would be helpful if the delegation could comment on reports that the Bureau had made use of the Law on Pre-election Campaigns to request information from media outlets about their editorial decisions, and explain what safeguards were in place to prevent bodies such as the Bureau from misusing their investigative powers to interfere with press freedom and media independence.

16. The entry into force of the Law on Transparency of Interest Representation and the planned launch of a related registration system were welcome developments. He nonetheless wondered whether consideration might be given to expediting the launch of the registration system or adopting other measures to enhance the transparency of lobbying activities.

17. **Ms. Donders** said that she wished to know how the amendment establishing social hatred, including hatred based on sexual orientation, as an aggravating circumstance had been publicized, what steps the State Party had taken to raise awareness of hate crimes and hate speech and whether the draft plan for reducing racism and antisemitism in Latvia for the period 2024–2027 had been adopted. She wished to know, too, what measures the State Party had taken to encourage the reporting of hate crimes and hate speech targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and to provide law enforcement officials with training that would help them to facilitate reporting and support victims. In addition, she wondered whether administrative liability could be incurred for hate speech and whether, as the Ombudsman had recommended, the State Party was prepared to impose administrative penalties on people who made public statements tantamount to hate speech.

18. The Constitutional Court had found that, in view of the need to strengthen national security, the law requiring nationals of the Russian Federation to pass a Latvian language test to renew their permanent residence permits was constitutional. She wondered, however, what risks to national security were posed by individuals with ties to the Russian Federation and how proficiency in Latvian could mitigate them. In that context, it would be helpful to know how many people had been deported under that law, what their background was, to which countries they had been deported and whether people affected by the law had had to complete a questionnaire on their political views. It would be useful to learn, too, whether nationals of countries other than the Russian Federation had to meet the same language requirement and, if not, what was done to ensure that the different requirements did not entail unequal treatment under the law, in violation of articles 2 and 26 of the Covenant.

19. She wondered how, in view of article 27 of the Covenant, on the right of linguistic minorities to use their own language, the State Party justified its planned prohibition on the use of Russian in all public media. She wondered, too, what efforts were made to alleviate ethnic tensions and promote mutual respect between speakers of different languages.

20. It would be helpful to learn whether a lack of relevant data prevented the State Party from taking effective measures to improve the situation of Roma, especially Roma women, and, if so, how it intended to overcome that obstacle. It would be helpful, too, to know what measures were being taken to combat online hate speech directed at Roma and other minority communities and to address the stigmatization, discrimination and social exclusion they faced.

21. She wished to know why the state of emergency that had been declared to combat a sharp increase in the number of people entering the State Party from Belarus without authorization had not been accompanied, in accordance with article 4 (3) of the Covenant, by action to inform the other States Parties to the Covenant of the provisions from which Latvia had derogated. She wished to know, too, whether the state of emergency had been lifted. What did the State Party do more generally to ensure that restrictions on the rights of all persons on its territory, including migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, were compatible with the Covenant?

22. **Mr. Šimonović** said that he would like to know why, according to a number of performance indicators, not all the goals set out in the Plan for the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021–2023 had been achieved, why some of the outstanding goals had not been included in the new plan for the period 2024–2027, and which of the goals set out in the new plan were likely to be the most difficult to achieve. It would be interesting to learn which measures had been most effective in narrowing the gender pay

gap in recent years, and what additional measures the Government intended to introduce to further narrow the gap.

23. Commending the State Party for its ratification of the Istanbul Convention, he said that he would like to know what new laws or policies had been introduced in application of the Convention; which provisions of the Convention had been the most difficult to implement; and whether there had been any organized opposition to the implementation of the Convention and, if so, on what grounds. Statistical data on gender-based violence, including femicide, over the previous three years would be welcome. He would like to know whether data on femicide were collected in line with the United Nations statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls and, if not, whether the State Party intended to introduce that methodology. It would be interesting to learn what steps the Government was taking to better prevent online violence against women, including women journalists and women in leadership positions. He would welcome information on trends in the reporting of cases of gender-based violence, especially rape; the conviction rate in recent years; and any measures taken recently to encourage the reporting of gender-based violence and the methods used to assess their effectiveness. It would also be useful to learn what percentage of women who reported violence benefited from accommodation in shelters and psychological, social, legal and rehabilitation services. Had there been any attacks on women living in shelters and, if so, how many and with what consequences for the victims and perpetrators?

24. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that the Committee would welcome disaggregated data on all deaths in places of detention, including psychiatric institutions, for the period 2020–2024. He would like to know whether investigations into deaths in custody had linked such deaths to prisoner-on-prisoner violence, coercion or neglect facilitated by the policy of inmate-administered prisons. If such a link had been established, he would like to know the number of cases involved and the outcomes of the related investigations. It would also be useful to learn what specific measures the State Party had adopted to address and prevent the abuse of vulnerable prisoners by dominant prisoners in self-administered prison units; how the State Party ensured that prison staff retained effective authority over and responsibility for the safety and well-being of all detainees, in line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules); and how many deaths in psychiatric institutions had been independently investigated and what steps were taken to ensure that independent investigations were conducted in all such cases, regardless of whether they were requested by relatives of the deceased. It would be interesting to learn what measurable outcomes had been documented since the introduction of the “Be Identified” programme, how the suicide risk assessment scale had been validated and what proportion of prisoners and psychiatric patients were regularly screened using that tool. Information on the percentage of the prison healthcare budget that was allocated to suicide prevention programmes and on the suicide prevention measures being applied in psychiatric institutions would be appreciated.

25. He would like to know whether the definition of torture established in article 130 of the Criminal Law was in line with the Covenant and the Convention against Torture. He would be grateful for updated statistics on complaints of torture and ill-treatment and related investigations, prosecutions, convictions and penalties. It would be useful to learn what measures were in place to protect individuals who reported torture or ill-treatment from reprisals by staff or other prisoners, particularly in self-administered prison units, and what safeguards were in place to ensure that the Internal Security Bureau investigated allegations of torture and ill-treatment, including those involving collusion between staff and prisoners, independently and effectively.

26. He would like to know how the State Party ensured that community-based social care services for persons with psychosocial and mental disabilities were of high quality and easily accessible, including in rural areas, and how the quality of those services was monitored and evaluated.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.*

27. **A representative of Latvia** said that domestic courts, including the Constitutional Court, had consistently emphasized that the Committee’s Views provided an authoritative

interpretation of the Covenant that national institutions must comply with in good faith. The commentary to article 89 of the Constitution stated that while the Committee's decisions concerning individual communications were authoritative interpretations of the Covenant, they were not court judgments and therefore not formally binding. The Supreme Court had likewise recognized the Committee's Views as a soft law instrument. The opinions and decisions of the Committee had been referred to in many domestic court cases. As for raising awareness about the Committee's work, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published information on its website, in multiple languages, on the international human rights treaties and associated complaint mechanisms. The Office of the Representative of Latvia before International Human Rights Institutions regularly replied to queries about the Committee and the individual complaints mechanism.

28. **A representative of Latvia** said that the Covenant had been referred to in some 300 domestic court cases between 2014 and 2024.

29. **A representative of Latvia** said that the curriculum at the National Defence Academy and all other military educational institutions included human rights training.

30. **A representative of Latvia** said that the draft legislation introduced by the President in March 2025 regarding the nomination process for the position of Ombudsman had been rejected by the parliament. However, alternative draft legislation on the process had been adopted on second reading and was pending final approval. While the President's proposal had provided for nominations to be made by the President, the alternative proposal provided for nominations to be made either by the President or by no fewer than 10 members of the parliament. The latter proposal was aimed at broadening the range of entities entitled to nominate candidates and therefore ensuring the selection of a professional, non-politically motivated candidate. Such an approach was in line with the spirit of the Constitution and existing constitutional practice. Furthermore, granting the President the right to nominate a candidate for Ombudsman strengthened the balance of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government.

31. Regarding the recent designation of the Office of the Ombudsman as the national preventive mechanism in line with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, the Ombudsman had already conducted visits to places where persons were or might be deprived of their liberty, and one investigation had been initiated subsequent to such a visit.

32. **A representative of Latvia** said that the Ombudsman was a completely independent institution and so, from a political point of view, he did not see the need to change the selection process, which was transparent and always involved significant discussion among the various political parties represented in the parliament. Given that the President currently had no power to nominate a candidate for Ombudsman, such a change would require the amendment of the Constitution.

33. **A representative of Latvia**, noting that over half of the 81 measures outlined in the action plan on the prevention of corruption had been implemented, said that the most common reason for non-implementation was lack of funding. The plan established objectives and key performance indicators, such as a corruption perception index and a political confidence index, to assess the impact of the measures. However, the overall effectiveness of the plan would be measured at the end of the implementation period; at that point, feedback would also be sought from the institutions concerned.

34. So far in 2025, the Bureau for the Combating and Prevention of Corruption had initiated proceedings in 18 criminal corruption cases and 88 cases were before the courts. In addition, six people had been found guilty on corruption-related charges. Data from 2024 indicated that corruption cases had been efficiently processed and investigated by the Bureau, the Internal Security Bureau and the State Border Guard. At least 10 high-level corruption cases had been pending in 2024.

35. Since 1 January 2025, the Bureau for the Combating and Prevention of Corruption had taken over the investigation of criminal corruption offences committed by State Revenue Service employees. Previously, the pretrial investigation of corruption-related crimes committed by such employees had been conducted by the internal security department of the State Revenue Service.

36. Also since the beginning of 2025, the mandate of the Internal Security Bureau had been expanded to cover the detection, investigation and prevention of all types of crimes, including those relating to corruption, committed by employees of the Prison Administration. Previously, the Bureau's mandate had covered only those crimes committed by officials in institutions that reported to the Ministry of the Interior. According to the Criminal Procedure Law, pretrial investigations led by the Bureau were subject to the oversight of a public prosecutor, and investigators were assigned a direct supervisor. The Minister of the Interior had oversight only in relation to the legality of the Bureau's administrative decisions and could revoke them if necessary.

37. Regarding the recent adoption of legislation on lobbying, although the interest representation register and declaration system had not yet been launched, general rules governing interest representation were in force. Amendments to the Law on the Transparency of Interest Representation had been adopted on 12 June 2025 based on expected changes to European Union regulations. According to the amendments, the interest representation register and declaration system would be launched in September 2028. In the meantime, a list of interest representatives would be made available to the public, and information about their activities would be published online.

38. **A representative of Latvia** said that her country had launched a number of awareness-raising initiatives for investigators, prosecutors and judges on how to handle cases of hate crimes, including hate speech against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. One such initiative consisted of training on the legal framework around hate crimes, including current European standards and best practices for addressing such crimes using a victim-centred approach. Two online platforms had been set up to raise public awareness of hate crimes and related issues. In addition, the Ministry of Justice had disseminated a circular in October 2023 on the interpretation and application of existing legal frameworks on hate crimes, including those targeting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The public broadcasting service had shown a number of programmes on specific cases of hate crime and their outcomes, as they were currently a topic of great social interest. The Government was not planning to introduce administrative liability for hate crimes, as it considered that the legal framework currently in place was sufficient.

39. **A representative of Latvia** said that, although the number of criminal cases involving hate speech and hate crimes was low – usually no more than 10 cases per year – the matter was taken very seriously and considerable effort was invested in preventing such crimes. In 2024, specially trained prevention officers had begun to be deployed to ensure that hate crimes were recognized as such. The aim was not simply to bring more cases to justice, but to bring about behavioural change in perpetrators and to help victims feel safe.

40. **A representative of Latvia** said that, although there were differences of opinion in Latvian society on some important issues, as in any healthy society, they could not be described as ethnic tensions. According to government research, minorities and the rest of the Latvian population watched the same news and entertainment programmes in the same proportions, indicating that Latvian society was living in a single information space. Other research on social memory showed that different groups within Latvian society had the same understanding of the importance of the country's regaining of its independence and the end of the Soviet occupation. Latvian society was very diverse, and the suffering experienced over the course of the country's history had, of course, left its mark, but that past was being addressed as the country continued its transition. The rights of minorities were not only enshrined in national law but were also respected in practice. The country's diversity was valued, and every year a festival was organized to showcase various national minorities and ethnic groups. A special fund had been created to provide grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially local NGOs carrying out projects aimed at enhancing civic participation and building social cohesion. Roma organizations had been among those to receive financing through the fund. Projects on media literacy and critical thinking – important tools for building a cohesive society – were being run by the country's libraries. Since the influx of Ukrainian refugees following the Russian invasion, the Government had also been providing support for language acquisition and cultural integration.

41. The Government had been working consistently on Roma integration for a number of years. However, as was the case all over Europe, the Roma community remained one of the most stigmatized and faced particular problems in the fields of education, healthcare and housing. Efforts were being made to tackle the stigmatization the community faced and to forge closer links between the community and State institutions, with a particular emphasis on supporting Roma employment. The use of Roma mediators in regions all over Latvia was proving helpful. Various awareness-raising campaigns were also being conducted. A series of 10 documentaries had been produced highlighting the work of Roma representatives; although initially intended for public awareness-raising, they had been so successful that they had been added to the school curriculum.

42. A plan had been developed for the protection of journalists against hate speech and hate crimes, particularly in view of the crucial role they played in disseminating accurate and reliable information at a time when disinformation was proliferating. In the event that journalists were the target of an act of hate speech or a hate crime, they could report it to the police or contact a dedicated hotline.

43. **A representative of Latvia** said that his own situation was a good counter-example to the idea that there was a problem with xenophobia and anti-Arab racism in Latvia. He had been born in Lebanon and had moved to Latvia in 1993 and was now serving as the country's Minister of Health.

44. **A representative of Latvia** said that, if he had understood correctly, the question about alleged ethnic tensions in Latvia had been raised in the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. For the Latvian Government and people, that was not an ethnic issue. It was a question of international law, of moral decency, of national security and of history and the colonial past. The Government had been very explicit in its attitude and messaging, making it clear that the war against Ukraine must unite all Latvians, regardless of the language they spoke at home or of the ethnicity with which they identified. Research showed that there were increasing differences in position on the issue, but not among different ethnic groups, rather within a single ethnic group: Latvian citizens who identified ethnically as Russian, for whom it was an extremely emotional and challenging issue. Many were very vocal in their protests against the actions of Russia. Some who openly espoused pro-Russian views faced condemnation, not because of their ethnicity or language, but simply because of their views.

45. **A representative of Latvia** said that in mid-2021, Latvia, along with Lithuania and Poland, had faced an unprecedented challenge caused by the sudden influx of third-country nationals at the border with Belarus. The situation had resulted from a deliberate and calculated attempt by Belarus to destabilize the European Union member States in response to the sanctions imposed on the Belarusian regime. By August 2021, Latvian border guards had identified 273 migrants in an irregular situation at the Belarusian border, compared to almost none before then. Latvian actions taken to protect the external borders of the European Union must be interpreted in the light of the broader geopolitical context and the obligations stemming from the country's membership of the European Union. Belarus had conducted a media campaign to show Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in a negative light. There was no indication that the situation would change in the foreseeable future, and Belarus, together with Russia, would continue to conduct hybrid warfare operations against Latvia. According to various sources, Belarus had facilitated the movement of migrants from the Middle East and Africa in particular by simplifying its visa procedures and encouraging travel to Minsk with the aim of illegal entry to the European Union. In response, the Government of Latvia had declared a state of emergency in the area bordering Belarus on 10 August 2021, which had remained in place until 10 August 2023. Since then, amendments had been made to the relevant border law and an enhanced border regime had been introduced.

46. **A representative of Latvia** said that Latvia had been among the States Parties that had derogated from certain articles of the Covenant during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic under the mechanism provided for in article 4. A domestic procedure was in place for assessing, when a state of emergency was declared, whether or not it would entail derogation from the Covenant. The explanatory report to the Cabinet of Ministers on the emergency situation in the border regions with Belarus had contained explicit references to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the Committee's practice. The



proportionality of the measures to be taken in the border region had been evaluated, and as the measures would not prevent migrants from seeking international protection and domestic remedies, it had been considered that they would not entail derogation from the Covenant.

47. **A representative of Latvia** said that, in 2022, the parliament had adopted amendments to the Immigration Law establishing the obligation for citizens of the Russian Federation with permanent residence permits to request the status of long-term residents of the European Union. One of the criteria for granting that status was basic knowledge of the Latvian language. Persons over the age of 75 or who had health conditions that made it difficult to learn a language were exempt from taking the language test. In addition, under the amendments, all Russian citizens with permanent residence were required to undergo a security check to provide information that had not been collected at the time of their initial application for permanent residence, since the Russian Federation had not been designated as a high-risk country from 2003 until its invasion of Ukraine.

48. The amendments in question had concerned around 25,000 citizens of the Russian Federation, of whom 16,000 had received the status of long-term residents of the European Union, 1,000 another type of permanent residence permit, 4,600 a two-year residence permit and 1,000 another type of temporary residence permit. Approximately 2,600 persons had left Latvia voluntarily as they did not wish to retain their Latvian residence permit. Return decisions had been made regarding 22 persons, of whom 6 had complied with the departure order and 16 had been expelled. Applicants for permanent residence who received a negative decision from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs could apply to the Ministry of the Interior to request a temporary residence permit on humanitarian grounds. In 2024, such temporary residence permits had been granted to five citizens of the Russian Federation.

49. **A representative of Latvia** said that most of the activities set out in the Plan for the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021–2023 had been completed, in close cooperation with NGOs and social partners. Some of the measures that had been deemed less effective had not been carried over to the next version of the plan. Others, such as those related to gender budgeting, had been carried over. According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2025* of the World Economic Forum, Latvia had climbed nine places in the Global Gender Gap Index and now ranked twenty-first. According to the Central Statistical Bureau, the gender pay gap had decreased from 16.5 per cent in 2023 to 13.9 per cent in 2025. Although female employment rates were relatively high, attention now needed to be paid to the quality of women's jobs. Other issues related to women's employment that were being addressed included career and educational choices and increasing the number of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics occupations.

50. **A representative of Latvia** said that the primary reason for the delay in ratifying the Istanbul Convention was political disagreement within the governing coalition. Certain political parties opposed the Convention, arguing that it conflicted with traditional values and the Constitution. Additional resistance came from religious and conservative groups, which objected to what they described as the introduction of gender ideology. Despite those challenges, the development of the National Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence 2024–2029 marked a significant step forward. The consultations on the draft plan had brought together key stakeholders from various sectors and regions, fostering a shared understanding of the issues and potential solutions. That inclusive approach had helped to cultivate a strong sense of ownership among participants. Social rehabilitation services, including access to shelters and crisis centres, were available to all victims of violence. Furthermore, the Government had opened a new safe house, offering victims a secure, private environment along with comprehensive support.

51. **A representative of Latvia** said that Latvia was one of the few countries that openly acknowledged the problem of informal hierarchies in prisons. On 11 February 2025, the Government had approved an action plan aimed at reducing informal prison hierarchies and implementing the Committee's recommendations in that regard. Prison staff were trained to recognize sensitive periods in inmates' lives, such as the first week of incarceration and the weeks leading up to a final judgment. The "I Am Aware" voluntary training programme was designed to help prisoners manage their emotions, thereby addressing the problem of self-harm in prisons.

52. **A representative of Latvia** said that psychiatry was no longer stigmatized and was now treated as a standard clinical medical discipline. As in other fields of medicine, one of the challenges faced was ageing. The majority of deaths in psychiatric hospitals occurred in geriatric wards. The more geriatric wards a hospital had, the higher the number of patient deaths. Regarding the protocol for handling a patient's body after death, it was not the responsibility of the relatives to request an autopsy. Instead, the doctor explained the situation and offered the option, after which the decision was made by the relatives. Additionally, persons in Latvia could now include instructions in their will about what should happen to their body after death. If a patient's death raised suspicions of any kind, the doctor would initiate an autopsy. In 2019, there had been six cases in psychiatric hospitals where doctors had initiated such examinations.

53. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that while acknowledging the existence of informal prison hierarchies was a positive step, it was important to ensure that self-management systems did not come at the expense of the prisoners themselves. He therefore wished to know what measures the State Party was taking to prevent the formation of mafias within the prison system. He also wondered whether the State Party could provide information on the current proportion of individuals with psychosocial and mental disabilities in institutions, compared to the proportion benefiting from community-based or alternative social care services; whether the available services met the needs of all affected individuals; and what measures had been taken to ensure that all psychiatric institutions, including social care centres, offered adequate sociotherapeutic and recreational activities, daily access to the outdoors and sufficient numbers of qualified staff to support both adults and minors.

54. **Ms. Donders** said that she wished to know whether training regarding hate crimes and hate speech for law enforcement, the judiciary and prosecutors was mandatory and conducted nationwide. While she appreciated the response regarding the low number of hate speech cases, she wished to point out that legal cases could offer valuable insight into the scope and specific nature of the problem. She thus wished to know more about how the State gathered disaggregated data on hate speech and hate crimes. Reports had been received indicating that Russian speakers in Latvia felt that attitudes towards them had worsened. While that might be attributed to political opinions rather than ethnicity, such tensions between language groups were a real challenge in Latvian society. The promotion of human rights education and a broader culture of human rights could help to address that challenge.

55. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would appreciate a reply to his question about the Bureau for the Combating and Prevention of Corruption and its use of the Law on Pre-election Campaigns to request information from media outlets regarding their editorial decisions.

56. **Mr. Carazo** said that, despite its important role in promoting human rights in Latvia, the Office of the Ombudsman was not represented at the current meeting. He urged the State Party to facilitate its participation in future reviews.

57. **A representative of Latvia** said that, in the case of *D v. Latvia*, the European Court of Human Rights had issued a judgment in early 2024 concerning informal hierarchies in Latvian prisons. Following that judgment, in October 2024, the Ministry of Justice, with the support of the Office of the Ombudsman, had prepared a general policy planning document aimed at combating and reducing the impact of informal hierarchies in prisons, recognizing the issue as a complex challenge that required gradual steps rather than immediate actions that might risk worsening the situation. Among the measures outlined in the document were the construction of a new prison in Liepāja, the training of prison guards and employees of the Prison Administration, and the introduction of the "dynamic security" concept. After the 2024 visit by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the document had been updated to incorporate that body's recommendations.

58. **A representative of Latvia** said that one of the most significant problems in Latvian prisons was outdated infrastructure, particularly the presence of large-capacity, dormitory-style cells. A major step forward in improving prison facilities was the construction of the new prison in Liepāja, which was expected to be operational by the end of the first quarter of 2026. The new facility would have a capacity of 1,200 inmates, representing roughly one third of the total prison capacity in Latvia. Its opening would also

allow for the closure of older prisons with dormitory-style cells. The new training centre for prison staff in Olaine had been fully operational since January 2025.

59. **A representative of Latvia** said that, as of 2019, there were 26,132 persons with mental disabilities in the country, and while the number had slightly increased since then, it remained relatively stable, at approximately 70 persons per 100,000. Latvia had 12 social service homes, with 50 to 150 places, where individuals could be voluntarily admitted and leave without restrictions. Latvia had only one long-term care facility for persons with severe mental disorders, with around 200 beds. That facility also operated on a voluntary basis.

60. Since 2017, the Government had undertaken mental health reform, implementing an action plan that had led to significant improvements. There were five psychiatric hospitals in Latvia, all of which employed certified, well-trained multidisciplinary teams, including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists and social workers, and made strong efforts to provide recreational therapies, including art and sports activities. The quality of care and patient satisfaction was monitored by an oversight body.

61. **A representative of Latvia** said that under a law adopted in June 2024, penalties had been amended for certain categories of criminal offences, including torture. Those amendments aimed to ensure that punishments brought about changes in offenders' thinking and behaviour, while tackling the root causes of criminal conduct. The definition of torture in Latvian criminal law was in line with the Convention against Torture and other relevant international standards.

62. **A representative of Latvia**, summarizing the available data on deaths in prisons between 2020 and 2024, said that in 2020, there had been 35 deaths in prisons, of which 7 had resulted from self-harm. Thirteen of those cases had been investigated and had resulted in prosecution. As a comparison, in 2024, there had been 29 deaths, including 6 from self-harm. Of those cases, 19 had been investigated and 4 had resulted in criminal proceedings.

63. Training courses on hate crimes and hate speech were conducted nationwide, with some sessions held online and others in person, allowing judges and prosecutors across Latvia to attend. Participation in such training was not mandatory for judges. Judges handling criminal cases typically chose to attend such courses, while those working primarily in civil or administrative law usually did not, nor were they expected to. The only training that was mandatory for judges concerned children's rights.

64. **A representative of Latvia** said that, in 2024, the Internal Security Bureau had received 227 complaints alleging violence, while in 2025, the number of such complaints stood at 157. Criminal proceedings had been initiated in response to 11 of the complaints submitted in 2024 and 6 of the complaints made in 2025. Furthermore, in 2024, three officials from institutions under the Ministry of the Interior had been convicted of crimes related to violence committed while on duty.

65. **A representative of Latvia** said that the national media landscape was positively reflected in international freedom of expression indicators, in particular with regard to political media independence. Latvian media, both commercial and public, enjoyed independence, and investigative and analytical journalism played a key role in holding politicians accountable. The public broadcasters had the autonomy to make decisions about their programming, including choices related to minority languages. For example, they had recently decided to establish a broadcasting unit in Daugavpils, a remote region near the Russian border. Such decisions were made freely and independently.

66. **A representative of Latvia** said that the most common corruption-related offence identified was the misuse of administrative resources, particularly in relation to exceeding election campaign funding limits. The Bureau for the Combating and Prevention of Corruption had recently been assigned a new function: supervising the use of artificial intelligence tools in election campaigns. No breaches had been identified in that area so far.

67. **A representative of Latvia** said that the Bureau for the Combating and Prevention of Corruption had no authority to influence what media organizations could or could not publish. Its role primarily consisted of financial oversight, particularly in the context of elections. For example, in the recent municipal elections, each political party had been required to submit a financial report at the end of the campaign, detailing expenditures on press coverage,

advertisements, interviews and related activities. The Bureau had audited those reports to ensure that all declared expenses had been legal and properly accounted for.

68. **A representative of Latvia** said that the National Electronic Media Council had no control over the programming of the public broadcasters, which made independent decisions in accordance with their editorial policy.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*