



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*

1. The Committee considered the eighth periodic report of Iraq (CEDAW/C/IRQ/8) at its 2182nd and 2183rd meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.2182 and CEDAW/C/SR.2183), held on 4 February 2026. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in CEDAW/C/IRQ/Q/8, and the responses of Iraq are contained in CEDAW/C/IRQ/RQ/8.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State Party of its eighth periodic report. It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State Party on its delegation, which was headed by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Saywan Barzani, and the Adviser to the Prime Minister of Iraq for Human Rights, Zaidan Khalaf Obaid, and included representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Migration and Displaced Persons, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2019 of the State Party's seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/IRQ/7) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Return of Real Estate to its Owners Act, No. 3 (2025), as part of transitional justice efforts;

* Adopted by the Committee at its ninety-second session (2–20 February 2026).



(b) Legal Aid Act, No. 7 (2024), which entered into force in 2025 and institutionalizes free legal aid through a dedicated Legal Aid Centre under the High Commission for Human Rights;

(c) Social Security and Workers' Retirement Act, No. 18 (2023);

(d) Yazidi Survivors Act, No. 8 (2021).

5. The Committee welcomes the State Party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption of the following:

(a) Third national action plan on women and peace and security (2025–2030);

(b) National strategy for the health of women, girls and adolescents (2025–2030);

(c) National financial inclusion strategy (2025–2029);

(d) National strategy to prevent and reduce inequalities in the world of work (2024–2028);

(e) National strategy to protect and improve the environment in Iraq (2024–2030) and establishment of the National Women's Team to Support Energy in 2023;

(f) National Network of Women Peace Mediators, covering all governorates, in 2023;

(g) National strategy for Iraqi women (2023–2030);

(h) National strategy to combat violence against women and girls (2023–2030);

(i) National strategy for education and higher education (2022–2031);

(j) National human rights plan (2021–2025) and establishment of a central monitoring committee, as well as the parallel adoption of a human rights plan by the Kurdistan Regional Government;

(k) Iraqi women's economic empowerment plan (2020–2025).

C. Sustainable Development Goals

6. **The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State Party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of Iraq and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.**

D. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the Council of Representatives, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.**

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

General context

7. The Committee underscores that, as it transitions from oil dependence to a diversified economy, the State Party must harness the potential of its full human capital, including all women, and ensure gender equality as both a human right and a pivotal macroeconomic policy. A strengthened human rights framework, multilateralism and gender equality, as foundations of renewed national development, are a bulwark against the disruptions caused to the social and political fabric by global economic shifts, regional conflicts and the legacy of armed conflict, which have hindered the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

Withdrawal of reservations

9. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The State Party's continued reluctance to withdraw its reservations to article 2 (f) and (g) and article 16 of the Convention;

(b) The failure to implement at the domestic level, ad interim, the constituent provisions of article 2 (b) to (e) of the Convention, which are fully in force in the State Party, and mandate the elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination against women and girls.

10. Notwithstanding the fact that reservations are a sovereign matter, a reservation that is incompatible with the letter and spirit of the Convention is impermissible under article 28 (2) of the Convention. The Committee therefore reiterates its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/IRQ/CO/4-6, para. 16, and CEDAW/C/IRQ/CO/7, para. 10) that the State Party:

(a) **Take steps to withdraw the reservations to article 2 (f) and (g) and article 16 of the Convention, which are incompatible with its object and purpose, and engage with religious leaders, religious scholars and women's rights groups, drawing on regional good practices, including the Faith for Rights framework of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to encourage the withdrawal;**

(b) **Develop, ad interim, a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, in line with articles 2 (b) to (e) of the Convention, encompassing, at a minimum, a review of legislation, its interpretation in conformity with the Convention, and measures to ensure that formal and substantive equality prevail over discriminatory traditional norms and practices in all sectors, including the private sector.**

Women and peace and security

11. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The lack of comprehensive information concerning how the third national action plan on women and peace and security fully integrates standards in relation to women and peace and security at the domestic level, and concerning mechanisms to ensure the equal and inclusive participation of women, as well as the lack of sufficient institutional funding for the implementation of the agenda in accordance with Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), of which Iraq was a sponsor;

(b) The absence of thorough policies to protect the rights of children born of rape by Da'esh members and other non-State actors, and the absence of mechanisms for continued cooperation with international partners to locate and rescue missing women and children;

(c) That Da'esh and other non-State actors have extensively used social media platforms to specifically target and recruit women and young girls;

(d) That, despite the official recognition of genocide and a reparation framework, which is provided for in the Yazidi Survivors Act, policies related to compensation and historical memory remain insufficient.

12. The Committee underscores that women's leadership is a determinant of national and regional security as Iraq transitions from decades of conflict, and it recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Ensure that the third national action plan on women and peace and security: incorporates international norms, for example, on climate change; addresses contemporary forms of conflict, such as technology-facilitated violence and transnational threats; includes clear timelines and gender-responsive indicators; is adequately resourced; provides for fifty-fifty parity; and ensures the inclusion of Kurdistan and Yazidi women in its implementation and in the National Network of Women Peace Mediators;**

(b) **Establish a framework to protect the rights of children born of rape by Da'esh members and other non-State actors, repeal discriminatory legislation and practices against them, ensure their access to benefits and services, and intensify efforts to cooperate with international partners to locate and rescue women and children who remain enslaved or abducted and provide them with safe spaces and psychosocial support;**

(c) **Adopt a strategy to ensure the participation of Iraqi women in international accountability efforts against Da'esh and other non-State actors, and promote the application of the Convention and the Committee's jurisprudence, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international criminal law to ensure non-repetition;**

(d) **Strengthen cooperation with other States and international mechanisms to: ensure accountability for the crimes of Da'esh and other non-State actors, including through universal jurisdiction; strengthen policies related to compensation and memorialization; prevent the online targeting, trafficking and recruitment by Da'esh of women and girls, by holding digital platforms accountable for harmful content; and ratify the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes.**

Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations

13. The Committee notes with concern the reluctance of some institutions to promote the Convention and its portrayal in some instances as incompatible with societal values, particularly in educational materials produced by the Ministry of Education, which risks weakening the social fabric related to women's rights and gender equality.

14. The Committee recommends that the State Party enhance the visibility of the Convention by ensuring its rights-based portrayal in educational curricula and public materials, including those developed by the Ministry of Education, and by conducting awareness-raising and capacity-building for educators, public officials and the general public in order to counter misinformation, prevent stigmatization of the Convention and promote its full domestic integration.

Constitutional and legislative framework

15. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That article 41 of the State Party's Constitution allowing personal status frameworks according to religions, sects, beliefs or choices, gender equality may be subordinated to sectarian laws;

(b) That the State Party retains discriminatory provisions in its legislation, including articles 41 (1), 398 and 409 of the Criminal Code, and that article 41 (1) allows a husband to "discipline" his wife and parents or teachers to "discipline" children;

(c) That the de jure and de facto discrimination embedded in the Ja'fari Personal Status Code (2025) subordinates women within the family and prevents their full and equal participation in the political economy and the important economic diversification of the State Party. It is particularly concerned that the amendments made in 2025 to the Personal Status Act, No. 188 (1959), as well as the Ja'fari Personal Status Code, discriminate against women by introducing broader judicial discretion and sect-specific provisions with the potential to favour men in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance and children's guardianship and care, in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Committee's general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States Parties under article 2 of the Convention, in which it is affirmed that religious law may not infringe women's rights.

16. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Ensure the justiciability of the Convention and encourage the judicial interpretation of article 41 of the Constitution in line with it;**

(b) **In close consultation with women's groups, develop a strategy to remove discriminatory provisions from its legal framework, including articles 398 and 409 of the Criminal Code, and remove article 41 (1) from the Criminal Code, in accordance with the judgment of the Supreme Court, drawing on experiences in the region, for example in such countries as Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, which have dismantled similar provisions from their legal systems;**

(c) **Through engagement with women's groups, develop a policy framework to repeal the provisions of the Personal Status Act and the Ja'fari Personal Status Code that discriminate against women and ensure that constitutional guarantees of equality supersede any contrary traditional norms and customs.**

Women's access to justice

17. The Committee notes with concern that the definition of terrorism fails to include rape as a crime of genocide, limiting accountability by prioritizing punishment for terrorist membership. It notes that the State Party lacks a strong framework to investigate and prosecute gender-based violence, including rape, as stand-alone crimes in cases involving Da'esh and other non-State actors, as well as mechanisms for the protection of witnesses and victims and adequate procedures to ensure survivors' participation in justice processes. The Committee further notes with concern that the Yazidi Survivors Act may at times impose burdensome and stigmatizing procedures on survivors, such as the filing of judicial complaints to gain access to reparations, or inflexible measures for gaining access to benefits for those in remote areas or camps. It notes that the Act has been implemented without transparent data on the reparations granted. Lastly, it notes with concern that despite a general amnesty law, under which executions have been temporarily halted and a

partial reprieve granted, the death penalty has not yet been abolished and disproportionately affects women in a context marked by gender bias and tolerance of so-called “honour”-based violence. Similarly, it notes the absence of publicly available, gender-disaggregated data on death penalty cases.

18. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Implement an intersectional, survivor-centred and trauma-informed legal framework to prosecute rape and other forms of gender-based violence as stand-alone crimes, ensuring that shame is shifted to the perpetrator, that the voices and narratives of the women survivors as the chief protagonists of justice are amplified, that protection from stigma and reprisals is guaranteed, and that investigations are not retraumatizing, including through the adoption of the Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information about Systematic and Conflict-related Sexual Violence (Murad Code), and amend the Yazidi Survivors Act to:

(i) Strengthen access to justice, simplify access to rights and ensure gender-sensitive and non-stigmatizing procedures;

(ii) Establish effective monitoring and align implementation of the Act with the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, in the spirit of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Policy on Gender-based Crimes of the Office of the Prosecutor of the Court, as revised in 2023;

(b) Take the necessary steps towards the abolition of the death penalty and, ad interim, establish a formal and permanent moratorium on executions and produce gender-disaggregated data on death penalty cases.

National machinery for the advancement of women

19. The Committee notes with concern that, since the abolition of the Ministry of State for Women’s Affairs, the State Party lacks a cohesive institutional and legal framework, governance instruments and systems to effectively mainstream gender equality and intersectionality across all policies and programmes. That situation is demonstrated by the dispersion of responsibilities for gender equality across institutions with limited authority, weak coordination and insufficient human and financial resources.

20. The Committee recommends that the State Party review its laws, policies and gender-related institutions to ensure their effectiveness and establish a de-centralized, high-level national mechanism for the advancement of women with a clear mandate, authority, adequate resources, gender-responsive budgeting and disaggregated performance data.

National human rights institution

21. The Committee notes with concern that the High Commission for Human Rights has been downgraded to B status by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. It is also concerned about the lack of a strategy for the implementation of the recommendations made by the Alliance in 2024 and the underrepresentation of women in the High Commission.

22. The Committee recommends that the State Party develop a national strategy aiming for the High Commission for Human Rights to regain A status pursuant to the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the

promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), expedite the implementation of the recommendations made by the Alliance in 2024 and ensure fifty-fifty parity in the High Commission.

Temporary special measures

23. The Committee notes with concern that women and girls, including those of African descent, remain underrepresented and disadvantaged in such areas as technology, education, diplomacy, the labour market and the private sector, including the energy sector, and in data governance and political and public life. It further notes the lack of temporary special measures directly aimed at increasing the participation of Yazidi women and girls, rural women and women with disabilities in political and economic life.

24. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt temporary special measures, particularly for Yazidi women and girls, rural women, women with disabilities and women of African descent, such as quotas, priority or preferential treatment, recruitment and promotion goals, scholarships, and outreach programmes and financial incentives; promote the use of similar measures by political parties and private actors;**

(b) **Measure progress in, and the effectiveness of, temporary special measures, and review its legal and institutional framework to eradicate gender bias and customary laws and practices that impede fifty-fifty parity in all aspects of life.**

Gender stereotypes

25. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The persistence of gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes that discriminate against women and girls and hinder the full enjoyment of their rights;

(b) The directive issued in 2023 by the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers replacing the term "gender" with "justice between the sexes" and the portrayal of the Convention in educational curricula as incompatible with family and societal values, thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes and reflects a paucity of efforts to fully integrate the concept of gender at the domestic level.

26. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Develop a comprehensive, well-resourced and monitored strategy to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes and promote non-violent masculinities, ensuring the engagement of traditional and religious leaders, men and boys, and the private sector;**

(b) **Reverse the directive issued by the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in 2023; ensure the consistent use and harmonizing of the term "gender", in line with the Convention, across laws, policies and educational curricula; and integrate the Convention fully into domestic frameworks and teaching materials.**

Harmful practices

27. The Committee notes with appreciation that the Kurdistan Region has adopted Act No. 8 (2011) criminalizing domestic violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. However, it remains concerned that:

(a) Child marriage, *mut'ah* (temporary) marriage, unregistered marriage and female genital mutilation continue at alarming rates, particularly in rural areas of the country;

(b) In article 409 of the Criminal Code, "honour" continues to be allowed as a mitigating factor for killing, and that in articles 128, 130 and 131 of the Criminal Code, so-called "honour motives" are allowed to qualify as an extenuating circumstance.

28. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Adopt uniform national legislation prohibiting harmful practices, including child marriage, *mut'ah* marriage, unregistered marriage and female genital mutilation, and ensure that it provides adequate penalties, victim protection mechanisms, accessible reporting systems, and awareness-raising and educational programmes to sustainably address the root causes of such practices;

(b) Repeal articles 128, 130, 131 and 409 of the Criminal Code and any other provision that enables, justifies or serves as an extenuating circumstance for harmful practices and violence against women and girls.

Gender-based violence against women and girls

29. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That violence against women and girls remains widespread and underreported across the country and that legislation to prevent, address and investigate gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, is lacking;

(b) The lack of comprehensive and effective mechanisms to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and the lack of information about gender-sensitive training for police, investigators and prosecutors;

(c) That article 25 of the Personal Status Act restricts women's freedom of movement by conditioning marital maintenance on obedience, including residence in the marital home or travelling with the husband, and that the patriarchal interpretation of laws further entrenches discriminatory stereotypes and gender-based violence;

(d) The increasing use of digital technologies for online gender-based violence, including cyberstalking, harassment, doxing and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and of sexually explicit content generated using artificial intelligence, coupled with legal gaps that fail to address evolving forms of digital abuse, resulting in low prosecution rates and inadequate protection of victims; the need to ensure that new laws on information and communications technology fully respect the right of women to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

30. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Expedite the enactment of comprehensive domestic legislation to prevent, address and punish gender-based violence and domestic violence, ensuring that such legislation is fully aligned with the Convention;

(b) Expand access to safe shelters and protection centres for women and girls who are at risk of violence, ensuring that they are adequately funded and operate within a clear legal framework, and provide specialized training for police, investigators and judicial officials to handle cases with a survivor-centred, gender-sensitive approach;

(c) Repeal article 25 of the Personal Status Act and prohibit invoking any religious interpretation to justify discriminatory stereotypes and gender-based violence;

(d) **Strengthen its legal and policy framework, including the accountability of platforms to prevent, investigate and punish all forms of online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including cyberstalking, harassment, doxing, non-consensual sharing of intimate images and of sexual content generated using artificial intelligence, by closing legislative gaps, enhancing law-enforcement and judicial capacity and ensuring effective, survivor-centred remedies; and ensure that new laws on information and communications technology safeguard women's rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.**

Trafficking in women and girls and exploitation of prostitution

31. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The lack of transparent, disaggregated data on trafficking, including online trafficking, including data on victim profiles, forms of exploitation, investigations, prosecutions and convictions;

(b) That child trafficking offences require proof of force or coercion, and that judges retain the sole authority to identify victims and refer them to care;

(c) Reports of the alleged exploitation of children affiliated with Da'esh in exchange for civil documentation, and of the involvement of officials in trafficking without their being subjected to prosecutions or disciplinary action;

(d) The absence of a non-punishment clause for trafficking victims, something that discourages reporting and increases the risk that victims, particularly those subjected to sexual exploitation or immigration-related offences, are penalized rather than protected;

(e) That *mut'ah* marriages continue to occur and may be reinforced by the Personal Status Act as amended in 2025, something that raises concerns about their use to conceal sexual exploitation and trafficking, particularly of internally displaced Yazidi women who are vulnerable to re-trafficking;

(f) That non-governmental organizations are legally prohibited from operating shelters, despite capacity constraints in State-run facilities.

32. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Establish a national data-collection system on trafficking in persons and collaborate with civil society to strengthen data validation and reporting mechanisms;**

(b) **Remove the requirement of force or coercion for child trafficking offences, and expand the authority to identify victims beyond the judiciary;**

(c) **Investigate and prosecute officials implicated in trafficking-related misconduct or corruption and provide regular and mandatory capacity-building with regard to gender-responsive and victim-centred investigation and interrogation methods in trafficking cases;**

(d) **Introduce a non-punishment clause for trafficking victims and measures for their protection, particularly those subjected to sexual exploitation or immigration-related offences, as well as flexible reporting mechanisms;**

(e) **Criminalize *mut'ah* marriages and ensure that women, in particular internally displaced Yazidi women, are effectively protected from trafficking threats and further abuses;**

(f) **Amend the legal framework to lift any restrictions preventing non-governmental organizations from operating shelters for victims and survivors.**

Equal participation in political and public life

33. The Committee notes the amendments to the electoral law guaranteeing a minimum quota for women candidates and elected representatives, as well as the results in the 2021 and 2025 parliamentary elections, in which women exceeded the quota. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The need to interpret article 49 of the Constitution establishing a minimum quota of 25 per cent of seats for women in the Council of Representatives as a floor, not a ceiling;

(b) Persistent barriers to the political participation of women, particularly women from minority communities and rural areas and women with disabilities, barriers that include limited access to campaign financing, exclusion from leadership roles and decision-making, threats to personal safety, and inadequate protection from online harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence;

(c) The underrepresentation of women in decision-making, particularly in historically male-dominated executive and senior public leadership positions;

(d) The lack of comprehensive, disaggregated data on the representation of Iraqi women at the international level, including in the diplomatic corps, on career progression, and on whether the participation of women in international delegations and forums yields results.

34. In line with its general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Institutionalize fifty-fifty parity between women and men in all decision-making systems (political, public, economic, digital and international), guide constitutional interpretation in line with fifty-fifty parity as a permanent legal norm and establish enforceable mechanisms with time-bound targets;**

(b) **Remove barriers to the political participation of women, particularly women from minority communities and rural areas and women with disabilities, by integrating an intersectional gender perspective into all laws, policies and decision-making systems, including campaign financing, and by explicitly penalizing online harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence;**

(c) **Identify and repeal patriarchal norms and practices limiting women's opportunities to accede to senior levels of decision-making, avoid gender segregation in decision-making roles and appoint women to senior roles in all areas of decision-making, ensuring their full and equal power in these roles and avoiding tokenism;**

(d) **Accelerate initiatives for the representation of women in diplomacy and collect, monitor and publish disaggregated data on women's representation and seniority levels in diplomacy and international organizations.**

Nationality

35. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That the Nationality Act, No. 26 (2006), denies women equal rights to transmit nationality to their children, particularly when the father is unknown,

missing or stateless, which has a disproportionate impact on displaced women and returnees from the north-east Syrian Arab Republic whose children lack legal recognition;

(b) That the Personal Status Act requires the presence of both spouses for marriage registration and the issuance of birth and kinship certificates, leaving women-led households, widows and internally displaced women without civil documentation when male relatives are deceased, missing or detained, and that the 2025 amendments to the Act further restrict women's rights by prioritizing the male spouse's religious affiliation in legal disputes;

(c) That the imposition of *tabri'ah* (public disavowal), though not codified in law, is increasingly required in order for women to gain access to civil documentation and return assistance in the case of internally displaced persons, particularly in displacement settings, disproportionately disadvantaging women and their children;

(d) The lack of comprehensive data on undocumented women and girls living in the State Party;

(e) That the State Party has not ratified the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

36. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Amend the Nationality Act to ensure women's equal right to pass on their nationality to their children in all circumstances, including where the father is unknown, missing or stateless;

(b) Amend the Personal Status Act and counter the discriminatory effects of its 2025 amendments by allowing women to independently obtain civil documentation and eliminating the requirement that both spouses must be present for marriage and birth registration;

(c) Explicitly prohibit, in law and practice, the imposition of *tabri'ah* or any informal, tribal or extralegal requirements as a condition for gaining access to civil documentation, return assistance or public services;

(d) Establish comprehensive, accessible and gender-sensitive systems for the collection of disaggregated data on undocumented women and children and use such data to inform targeted measures for universal access to legal identity and civil documentation;

(e) Ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Education

37. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That the Compulsory Education Act, No. 118 (1976), does not provide for compulsory education beyond primary level;

(b) The high rates of female illiteracy, particularly affecting women and girls in rural and conflict-affected regions, including Ninawa, Anbar, Kirkuk, Diyala and Sinjar, as well as Yazidi women and girls, refugees, returnees, internally displaced women and girls, and women and girls with disabilities;

(c) That the State Party lacks a strategy to address and counter poverty, insecurity, forced marriage and other root causes of school dropout among girls;

(d) The overcrowding of classes, the lack of adequate sanitation facilities, the absence of measures to address period poverty and of safe transportation, and the lack of accessibility in schools and universities;

(e) The discriminatory content in school curricula and textbooks, which furthers gender stereotypes, and the need to amend the education curricula in order to align them with the Convention;

(f) The underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and the arts, including the history of Iraq, which boasts a tangible and intangible culture and heritage that are deeply rooted in the first human civilizations and that have contributed to the rich and diverse heritage of Kurdistan and Yazidi culture.

38. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Amend the Compulsory Education Act to extend compulsory education to the secondary level;

(b) Implement such measures as accelerated learning programmes and distance learning to eliminate female illiteracy and dropout rates and develop, in consultation with women and girls with disabilities, a strategy that ensures inclusive education, the accessibility of educational facilities, and access to learning materials and assistive devices;

(c) Ensure that the national strategy for education and higher education (2022–2031), the “Back to education” initiative and the poverty reduction strategy address poverty, insecurity, forced marriage and other root causes of dropout;

(d) Guarantee sufficient and adequate educational facilities, transportation and access to water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools, including safe drinking water, hand-washing facilities with soap and water, functional toilets and conditions conducive to decent menstrual health and hygiene management, including affordable or free-of-charge menstrual products;

(e) Set a timeline to remove gender stereotypes from educational curricula and to incorporate teaching on human rights, including women’s and girls’ rights in accordance with the Convention;

(f) Adopt targeted measures to increase the participation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and the arts, including through gender-responsive curricula, scholarships and mentorship programmes; promote women’s equal access to and representation in the preservation, transmission and creative expression of the cultural heritage of Iraq, including the diverse cultural traditions of Kurdistan and the Yazidi community; and implement gender-sensitive peace education that promotes the non-repetition of conflict.

Employment

39. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The lack of comprehensive data disaggregated by sector and region in relation to women’s labour force participation and the gender pay gap, including regarding women with disabilities, rural women and women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in both the formal and informal sectors;

(b) The absence of effective implementation and oversight mechanisms to enforce maternity leave under the Labour Code, Act No. 37 (2015), insufficient access to affordable public and private childcare facilities, particularly for low-income, rural and working women and children, and the absence of policies promoting the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work;

(c) The lack of up-to-date data on sexual harassment in the workplace and the absence of a comprehensive strategy to prevent, investigate and address such cases, including in the informal economy;

(d) The failure to extend social security and pension coverage to women in the informal sector;

(e) Insufficient information on the working conditions of women migrant workers, including the impact of sponsorship systems and the safeguards in place to protect them from discrimination, exploitation and exclusion from social protection schemes;

(f) The insufficient representation of women in the State Party's efforts to diversify its industry beyond an oil-dependent economy.

40. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Ensure that the national strategy to prevent and reduce inequalities in the world of work (2024–2028) addresses the concentration of women in low-paid work, and adopt targeted measures to promote access to formal employment;

(b) Implement effective maternity protection, including for women in the informal economy, support mothers' return to work through breastfeeding and childcare facilities, and promote the equal sharing of care responsibilities and domestic work through paid paternity leave and expanded care services;

(c) Strengthen the enforcement of provisions in the Labour Code and the Criminal Code on workplace sexual harassment, including in the informal economy, by ensuring protection from retaliation, regular labour inspections, independent investigations, the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators, and access to effective remedies; ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization;

(d) Facilitate the transition of women from informal to formal employment; extend the coverage of labour and social protection to women in the informal economy and unpaid work, and to self-employed women;

(e) Address the situation of women migrant workers affected by sponsorship systems by strengthening protection against exploitation and abuse, providing clear information on rights and benefits, and promoting fair and non-discriminatory recruitment practices;

(f) Ensure fifty-fifty parity in the State Party's new economy and in all efforts towards its economic diversification beyond a dependency on oil.

Health

41. The Committee notes the expanded access to health services for women, but remains concerned:

(a) At the adverse effects of forced marriage and child marriage on women's and girls' physical and mental health, including early pregnancy, increased risks during pregnancy and childbirth, and the inadequate support for affected mothers and their newborns;

(b) That, under articles 417 to 419 of the Criminal Code, abortion is permitted only when the life of the pregnant woman is at risk;

(c) The lack of universal and equitable access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception and maternal healthcare,

particularly for women and girls living in rural and conflict-affected areas and those belonging to marginalized and vulnerable groups;

(d) The limited availability of specialized mental health and psychosocial support services for survivors of sexual violence, including Yazidi women and girls, and for adolescents subjected to online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

42. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Ensure access to comprehensive medical, nutritional, psychosocial and postnatal care for women and girls affected by early and forced pregnancy and their newborns;**

(b) **Establish a clear timeline to decriminalize abortion in all cases, with a view to legalizing voluntary, safe and accessible abortion;**

(c) **Ensure universal, affordable and non-discriminatory access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception and maternal care, including for women and girls in rural, conflict-affected and marginalized communities;**

(d) **Provide specialized, survivor-centred mental health and psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence, including Yazidi women and girls, and for adolescents affected by online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.**

Economic benefits and accountability for women's socioeconomic rights

43. The Committee notes that projections of foreign direct investment in the State Party driven by infrastructure, energy and development projects, with growing investments in such non-oil sectors as construction, renewables and banking, represent a key opportunity for the economic empowerment of women. However, it notes with concern:

(a) That the State Party has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the Middle East and North Africa region, and that there are persistent structural inequalities limiting women's economic empowerment, as reflected in a gender pay gap of 35 per cent and in the high concentration of women in informal employment, which is often characterized by insecurity and lack of social protection;

(b) That existing economic and employment initiatives remain limited in scope, sustainability and outreach, particularly with regard to addressing unemployment and the dominance of informal work among women in the most vulnerable situations;

(c) That women have limited access to financial services, as evidenced by low rates of bank account ownership (around 20 per cent) and by low rates of property registered in women's names, something that constrains their access to credit due to collateral requirements; that there is a lack of information on tax exemptions available to women entrepreneurs as a temporary special measure; and that there is a lack of information on compliance with the requirement of the International Finance Corporation and the Central Bank of Iraq that women should be represented on the board of directors of every Iraqi bank;

(d) That gender-based violence and the stigma surrounding its reporting constitute major barriers to women's economic and social empowerment, while low income and limited economic resources restrict the ability of survivors, in particular among internally displaced women living in camps, to leave abusive relationships and achieve independent livelihoods;

(e) That certain marriage practices, including *mut'ah* marriages and child marriages, which are particularly prevalent in poorer households, undermine women's and girls' legal and economic rights because they occur outside formal registration systems, thereby limiting access to alimony, inheritance and social protection;

(f) That the Personal Status Act and its 2025 amendments further restrict women's inheritance and property rights, access to credit, mobile money and collateral, disproportionately affecting displaced women, single mothers and widows and preventing them from securing economic independence;

(g) That the slow and limited implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Act, alongside procedural barriers and exposure to stigma, restrict the access of Yazidi survivors to comprehensive remedies, including housing, healthcare, psychosocial support, education and economic reintegration;

(h) That women have limited participation in sports, including in leadership, coaching, competitive sports, recruitment and selection processes, and that rural women and girls and women and girls with disabilities have limited access to sports and recreational activities.

44. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Close the gender pay gap by effectively enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and regularly reviewing wages in sectors where women are concentrated;**

(b) **Develop targeted recruitment policies and temporary special measures to increase the participation of women in key economic sectors, integrate a gender perspective into economic diversification, expand access for women to such emerging fields as digital industries, artificial intelligence and green economies, and extend labour and social protection to women in informal, unpaid and self-employed work;**

(c) **Promote entrepreneurship among women, investment in women-owned enterprises, financial literacy and participation in the digital economy by partnering with financial institutions to provide gender-responsive support for e-commerce and collateral-free credit, scaling mobile and digital banking for women with limited access, providing tax exemptions for women entrepreneurs and collecting gender-disaggregated data on digital economy use and impact;**

(d) **Address the economic impact of gender-based violence on the financial independence of women by developing economic support, social protection and livelihood opportunities for women leaving abusive relationships, particularly for internally displaced women living in camps, and provide them with assistance on professional development and financial literacy;**

(e) **Repeal all marriage practices, including *mut'ah* marriage and child marriage, that undermine women's legal and economic rights and limit their access to alimony, inheritance and social protection;**

(f) **Derogate from the provisions of the Personal Status Act and its 2025 amendments that enable the restriction of women's inheritance and property rights, and ensure that no customary or sectarian practices hinder women's economic and social empowerment;**

(g) **Streamline procedures under the Yazidi Survivors Act to ensure survivors' swift access to comprehensive remedies, including housing, healthcare, psychosocial support, education and economic reintegration;**

(h) **Strengthen the participation of women and girls, including those with disabilities and from rural areas, in recreational and professional sports, by increasing investment in women-dominated sports, expanding training on sports management for women and ensuring equal access to sports-related economic benefits.**

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

45. The Committee notes with concern that environmental degradation, desertification and water scarcity disproportionately affect rural, internally displaced and disadvantaged women, as those trends increase their responsibilities with regard to unpaid care and subsistence, heighten the risks to their personal safety, and exacerbate instances of child marriage. The Committee is concerned at the exclusion of women from decision-making processes related to land, water management and climate adaptation.

46. **The Committee underscores that the participation of women is pivotal to overcome the vulnerabilities of the water-agriculture-poverty nexus and build resilience to climate change. It recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Integrate a gender perspective in legislation, policies and programmes on climate change, rural development and climate-resilient agricultural practice; implement measures to address the responsibilities borne by with regard to unpaid care and subsistence and the risks to their personal safety in that context; and empower women to participate on an equal basis with men in decision-making in relation to climate change;**

(b) **Ensure fifty-fifty parity and incorporate gender equality principles into the nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement and in the State Party's national climate investment plan (2025–2030) with a target of \$1.3 billion–\$3.3 billion for green projects in energy, agriculture and water, and similar initiatives.**

Women facing intersecting forms of discrimination

Women and girls with disabilities

47. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The insufficient policies to address the intersection of gender and disability, particularly affecting women and girls with disabilities living in rural areas, displaced women, and those belonging to ethnic or religious minorities;

(b) The lack of comprehensive information on the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs Act, No. 38 (2013), as amended, in order to ensure the economic empowerment, political participation and access to basic services of women and girls with disabilities;

(c) The absence of comprehensive, disaggregated data to assess the impact of public policies on women and girls with disabilities, and their limited participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of such policies.

48. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Systematically integrate gender and disability perspectives across all laws, policies and programmes, with targeted measures addressing the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities, including reasonable accommodations and accessibility, and with special attention to those in who live in rural areas, are displaced or belong to minority communities;**

(b) **Ensure that the Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs Act is fully aligned with the Convention, and apply temporary special measures to ensure the participation of women and girls with disabilities in the civic space, protect their freedom of speech, assembly and association, and promote the economic empowerment and political participation of women and girls with disabilities;**

(c) **Establish comprehensive systems for the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability, and ensure the meaningful, equal and inclusive participation of women with disabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies that affect them.**

Rural women

49. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) The intersecting forms of discrimination faced by rural women, which limit their access to justice, land and agricultural support, healthcare, social services, education and vocational training, adequate housing, economic opportunities and Internet connectivity;

(b) The lack of clear information on the role, effectiveness and concrete outcomes of the Higher Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Rural Women in improving access for rural women to essential services, resources and rights.

50. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt targeted, gender-responsive measures to address the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by rural women, ensuring their equal access to all rights protected under the Convention;**

(b) **Strengthen the mandate, coordination and accountability of the Higher Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Rural Women, ensure adequate resources for its work, and systematically report on its concrete outcomes in improving access for rural women to services, resources and rights.**

Women human rights defenders

51. The Committee notes with concern information received concerning violence and attacks against women human rights defenders, including online violence, arbitrary detentions, threats and attacks, the increased financial restrictions on the operation of civil society organizations, and the lack of comprehensive information on actions implemented by the State Party to ensure due diligence in addressing these cases.

52. **The Committee recommends that the State Party strengthen its due diligence mechanisms, promptly and impartially investigate all attacks against women human rights defenders, establish an independent and effective national protection mechanism with a rapid and confidential response, and eliminate financial and legal restrictions that affect women's organizations and hinder the role of women human rights defenders.**

Women in detention

53. The Committee notes with concern:

(a) That women deprived of liberty, including those detained with children, face overcrowding, inadequate medical care, serious barriers to justice and due process violations, such as coerced confessions; that there is a lack of accessibility and reasonable accommodations for women with disabilities; and that there is a lack

of clarity on how the draft law on alternatives to imprisonment will address women's specific needs and reduce reliance on detention;

(b) The absence of specialized legal aid for detained women, particularly those from rural and impoverished backgrounds, survivors of domestic violence and women prosecuted based on family ties, and the lack of clarity of how the Legal Aid Centre under the High Commission for Human Rights provides services for imprisoned women;

(c) That the criminalization of homosexuality and prostitution disproportionately affects women and exposes them to abuse and arbitrary detention;

(d) The lack of comprehensive data on women in detention, disaggregated by age, nationality, ethnicity, disability status and offences.

54. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Improve conditions of detention for women, ensure accessibility and reasonable accommodation for women with disabilities, implement safeguards against coerced confessions and other due process violations, ensure that alternatives to detention are gender-responsive, effectively reduce reliance on imprisonment and implement the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules);**

(b) **Ensure that the Legal Aid Centre under the High Commission for Human Rights and other bodies provide accessible legal aid services for detained women, particularly those from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds and women prosecuted based on family ties;**

(c) **Decriminalize homosexuality and women in prostitution;**

(d) **Systematically collect disaggregated data on women deprived of liberty, to inform policy and oversight.**

Marriage and family relations

55. The Committee underscores that the existence and application of separate legal regimes based on sectarian affiliation in the State Party deepen discrimination, undermine the principle of equality before the law and reinforce the perception that rights are determined by sectarian belonging rather than by citizenship, entrenching sectarian divisions from an early age. It is further concerned:

(a) That articles 128 and 409 of the Criminal Code allow leniency for crimes committed in the name of "family honour";

(b) That the State Party does not criminalize marital rape, and that article 398 of the Criminal Code allows perpetrators of rape to evade punishment by marrying the victim, thereby reinforcing coercion, stigma and impunity;

(c) That the Ja'fari Personal Status Code allows for unilateral modification of marriage contracts without the consent of the woman concerned and institutionalizes legal inequality through parallel personal status regimes, and that conciliation and mediation mechanisms may pressure women to reconcile;

(d) The persistence of child marriage, including through exceptions granted by the judiciary from the age of 15, as well as unregistered marriages;

(e) That recent amendments to the Personal Status Act may expand sectarian legal frameworks, weaken civil standards and judicial protection and introduce

additional risks of discrimination based on identity or religion, including for Yazidi women and children born of rape.

56. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Abolish articles 128 and 409 of the Criminal Code to ensure that crimes committed in the name of “family honour” are prosecuted and punished without leniency;**

(b) **Criminalize marital rape and repeal article 398 of the Criminal Code to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence cannot evade accountability through marriage to the victim;**

(c) **Eliminate all exceptions to the minimum age of marriage, prohibit polygamy, ensure women’s equal rights to separation and inheritance, abolish parallel discriminatory personal status regimes, ensure that no woman is subject to a change in the regime applicable to her marriage without her full informed consent and ensure that mediation does not replace justice and that women are not pressured to reconcile in cases of violence;**

(d) **Establish and enforce the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both women and men without exception, as well as mandatory marriage registration;**

(e) **Prevent the expansion of sectarian legal frameworks, uphold civil standards and judicial protection, and prevent discrimination based on religion or identity, including against Yazidi women and children born of rape.**

Data collection and analysis

57. The Committee notes with concern the need to ensure the participation of women in data governance and security and to recognize their role in the ownership and stewardship of data relating to their communities, territories and knowledge, and notes the lack of measures to protect their intellectual property rights.

58. The Committee recommends that the State Party guarantee the right of Iraqi women to participate in the creation, collection, ownership, application and security of data in all governance frameworks.

Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

59. The Committee encourages the State Party to ratify, as soon as possible, the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

60. Following the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Committee calls upon the State Party to reaffirm its implementation and to re-evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

Dissemination

61. The Committee requests the State Party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State Party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the parliament and the judiciary, as well as to traditional and religious leaders, to enable their full implementation.

Ratification of other treaties

62. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State Party to the nine major international human rights instruments¹ would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State Party to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a Party.

Follow-up to the concluding observations

63. The Committee requests the State Party to provide, within two years, written information on steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (a), 13 (c), 17 (b) and 19 (a).

Preparation of the next report

64. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the ninth periodic report of the State Party in line with a future clear and regularized schedule for reporting by State Parties (General Assembly resolution 79/165, para. 6) and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State Party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

65. The Committee requests the State Party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).

¹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.