



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

Distr.: General  
17 August 2021

Original: English

---

## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 104th session

### Summary record of the 2824th meeting

Held via videoconference on Tuesday, 10 August 2021, at 4 p.m. Central European Summer Time

*Chair:* Ms. Li

## Contents

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under  
article 9 of the Convention

*Combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of Lebanon*

---

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

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



*The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention**

*Combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of Lebanon*  
([CERD/C/LBN/23-24](#); [CERD/C/LBN/Q/23-24](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Lebanon joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon), introducing his country's combined periodic reports ([CERD/C/LBN/23-24](#)), said that despite the manifold crises facing it, including an ongoing refugee crisis, a public health crisis and air strikes launched by Israel, Lebanon was committed to fulfilling its human rights obligations. The high-level delegation's participation in the dialogue with the Committee was a reflection of that commitment. The country's name, Lebanon, had long been synonymous with diversity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.
3. In recent years, the authorities had focused on making legislative changes that would help improve living conditions in the country. In that respect, civil society organizations, which had been the driving force behind a number of those changes, had been of great help to the legislative and executive authorities.
4. Despite not having signed the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Lebanon had never closed its doors to those seeking refuge. Although conditions in Lebanon were deteriorating, the country made every effort to provide basic services to refugees. In cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs had developed a plan to respond to waves of migration from Syria. The Ministry of Education, for its part, had had the country's schools operate in double shifts to ensure that all children, Syrian or Lebanese, could go to school. Health services provided in the context of efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including vaccination services, were provided at no charge regardless of the beneficiary's nationality or migration or other status. Efforts to overcome the obstacles to strengthening protection of the rights of migrant workers, including domestic workers, were also under way. The Lebanese authorities and the international community were cooperating in a bid to produce a comprehensive survey of all those who, regardless of their nationality, had been affected by the explosions in the port of Beirut little more than a year earlier.
5. Legislative protections for women and children had been strengthened, including a proposed amendment to extend the Domestic Violence Act to cover marital rape and the promulgation of a law on sexual harassment. Draft legislation to prohibit child marriage was also under consideration. The efforts of the country's religious communities to raise the minimum age for marriage had led to amendments to the communities' various personal status laws, which was worth highlighting given the absence of a single personal status law for all communities. Representatives of civil society and all sectors of government were working to update the National Plan for Human Rights in Lebanon.
6. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Rapporteur), highlighting the diversity of the State party's population and acknowledging the trying circumstances facing its people, said that he would welcome information on the measures that the State party had taken to adopt a law on racial discrimination that incorporated a definition of racial discrimination in keeping with article 1 of the Convention. He would also welcome information on its efforts to combat incitement to racial hatred and discrimination. In addition, it would be useful to have an account of instances of hate speech or discriminatory statements, including in traditional and social media, that had been reported to the authorities, the number of such reports, if any, and their outcome.
7. He wondered what steps had been taken to combat discrimination against migrant domestic workers, who were often subjected to invasions of privacy that their Lebanese counterparts were protected from, and to ensure that they could, in accordance with the Press Act, the Television and Radio Broadcasting Act and the Criminal Code, obtain redress. He would also appreciate up-to-date information from the State party on the legislative efforts

that were under way to ensure that the acts mentioned in article 4 of the Convention were made offences punishable by law.

8. **Mr. Bossuyt** (Country Task Force) said that it would be interesting to know what the ongoing evaluation of the National Plan for Human Rights in Lebanon 2014–2019 had shown about the effectiveness of the Plan. He also wished to know whether it was true that, as reports received by the Committee had noted, no funds had been set aside for the operation of the State party's national human rights institution, a commission whose members, according to the State party's report, had been appointed in May 2018.

9. He would welcome information about the new national human rights plan and wondered in particular whether it would cover efforts to combat racial discrimination. He also wished to know whether the State party planned to provide the national human rights institution with adequate funding and whether a 2020 bill that would ensure the institution's financial independence was on its way to becoming law. In addition, he asked whether complaints of racial discrimination were lodged with the institution and, if so, how many such complaints had been registered and what the outcome of the complaints had been.

10. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Task Force) said that the State party had noted in its periodic report that the lack of automated data collection in the Lebanese justice system had made it difficult for it to comply with the Committee's request for accurate data on legal proceedings in cases of offences related to racial discrimination. The Committee did not require computerized data, however, and would be grateful if the State party could provide a summary of data, even if brief, drawn from the records of the courts of Beirut, for example. In that connection, he asked what measures were being taken to improve the collection of such data. He also asked whether migrant workers in the State party faced discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin.

11. Noting the Government's commitment to ensuring quality education for all, he asked what progress had been made in combating racial discrimination in that sphere. In particular, he would be grateful for information on the content of school textbooks, including with regard to the portrayal of different communities. He wished to know what steps the Government had taken to establish fast, clear and consistent procedures that enabled refugee children to attend school and to ensure that principals did not apply their own interpretations of ministerial circulars concerning the documents required for school enrolment, examinations and certification. The Committee would also appreciate details concerning the procedures for the determination of the educational level of refugee children, including those with incomplete or no education documentation.

12. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that, in March 2017, the State party had submitted on time an interim report ([CERD/C/LBN/CO/18-22/Add.1](#)) on its follow-up to recommendations contained in the Committee's previous concluding observations. The issues that the Committee had selected for follow-up – the national human rights plan and national human rights institution and the right to education – were also addressed in some detail in the periodic report. Nevertheless, he would be interested to hear about any developments that had taken place since the submission of the report in January 2019. Information might be provided on the functioning of the National Human Rights Commission and the implementation of the National Plan for Human Rights and on developments concerning the exercise of the right to education, especially with regard to restrictions on access to education on the grounds of nationality and immigration status, if any.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.55 p.m.*

13. **Ms. Alzien** (Lebanon) said that the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights had recently announced the second phase of the evaluation and update of the National Plan for Human Rights. Ministries, independent experts, international organizations and trade unions were among the stakeholders participating in that process. The updated Plan would provide for the protection of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, and would also cover issues such as human trafficking, the fight against poverty, and Syrian refugees. A presentation on the National Plan for Human Rights was given each year on the occasion of Human Rights Day. Progress made under the Plan included the adoption of an efficient process for the drafting and submission of reports within the framework of the universal periodic review.

14. Two draft decrees on the funding and operations of the National Human Rights Commission had been submitted to the Council of Ministers. Various ministries and the Council of State had been consulted on the draft decrees, which would also be subject to the approval of Parliament. The resignation of the Government after the Port of Beirut explosions of August 2020 had caused delays in the adoption of laws relating to the functioning of the National Human Rights Commission; however, it was expected that the two decrees would be ratified as soon as possible after a new Government had been formed or a favourable opinion issued by the Council of State.

15. **Ms. Dagher** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon had a longstanding policy of combating all forms of discrimination. While the law contained no specific definition of racial discrimination, there was nothing to prevent the justice authorities from applying the definition contained in the Convention, since the Convention had a higher authority than national law. The Ministry of Justice had studied the possibility of drafting a bill on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, which would cover the acts proscribed by article 4; however, the COVID-19 pandemic and other exceptional circumstances had prevented further progress.

16. Since 2018, Parliament had promulgated legislation, including a law that criminalized sexual harassment and provided support and rehabilitation for victims and laws to strengthen the activities of civil society and to support the right of defence and the right to counsel. Several bills remained under discussion in parliamentary committees, including a bill on the independence of the judiciary. The Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children was currently considering a bill to regulate child marriage.

17. **Mr. Ahmad** (Lebanon) said that the Criminal Code proscribed all acts that amounted to hate speech, namely those which instigated racial bigotry or provoked conflict among communities, which were punishable by a term of 1 to 3 years' imprisonment. The authorities followed up on all complaints of racial discrimination, although it was difficult to gather statistics owing to the lack of automated data collection in the justice system – a difficulty that had been further complicated by the confinement measures taken in the context of the pandemic. Victims were entitled to seek redress in accordance with the relevant laws and procedures. The National Human Rights Commission was competent to receive claims and complaints of acts of discrimination and to seek solutions through mediation or litigation.

18. **Ms. Khoury** (Lebanon) said that the content of the national curriculum, which was taught in both State and private schools, had been updated. The curriculum was underpinned by principles and values, such as fairness, solidarity and tolerance, that prepared students to accept the other and differences of opinion. Students were encouraged to engage in dialogue and to resolve conflicts. Under the Constitution, religious communities had the right to have their own schools provided that they followed the general rules on public instruction issued by the State.

19. In recent years, Lebanese schools had opened their doors to huge numbers of Syrian refugee children. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, recognizing the need to ensure that Syrian children attended school, had allowed them to enrol by waiving the requirement to provide identification documents. As was natural, schools set tests to determine the level of students' education so that they could be placed in the appropriate class. The Ministry had developed specific programmes for children under the age of 6 years who were unprepared to join the formal education system because their studies had been interrupted. Many schools had extended their facilities to cater for Syrian refugee children. All children enrolled in Lebanese schools participated in official examinations on an equal basis. Indeed, many refugee children performed well and achieved consistently high grades. Students who passed their exams received a certificate issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education that allowed them to continue their studies if they moved to another country. The Government recognized that Syrian children could face serious difficulties in following the Lebanese curriculum because mathematics and science were taught in English or French, and had taken steps to facilitate learning in Arabic, thus minimizing the risk of academic failure and school abandonment.

20. **Mr. Al Gusaini** (Lebanon) said that the Directorate General of General Security had introduced an automated mechanism to receive complaints of various kinds, including

complaints of racial discrimination and of abuse of power by law enforcement officers. All complaints were recorded and analysed and the data would be used to inform specific strategies and programmes. The authorities had also launched a domestic violence hotline.

21. **Ms. Alzien** (Lebanon) said that successive Governments had taken measures to combat racist hate speech, especially that directed against migrant workers and refugees. In 2018, Parliament had adopted the National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism, which defined violent extremism as the spread of individual and collective hatred that might lead to structural violence, the rejection of diversity, the non-acceptance of others and the use of violence as a means of expression and influence, and behaviour that threatened values that ensured social stability. That strategy had nine pillars, each containing specific objectives for line ministries, including fostering a culture of human rights, supporting the efforts of municipalities and local communities to reduce tensions between Lebanese society and Syrian refugees, cooperating with research institutions, building the capacity of host communities and strengthening national cohesion to respond to the health, economic and financial repercussions of hosting refugees. To implement the strategy, various platforms and task forces had been set up and a community consultation process had been launched.

22. **Mr. Elayi** (Lebanon) said that, notwithstanding the fact that the education of Palestinian refugees was the responsibility the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), around a third of all Palestinian students in Lebanon, or 22,000 persons, were enrolled in Lebanese schools without any discrimination and that Palestinian refugees could enrol in university on an equal basis with Lebanese nationals.

23. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon) said that the members of the delegation who were participating in the meeting from the capital were to be congratulated on their efforts to serve the public good in Lebanon despite the countless hardships they were currently facing.

24. **Mr. Guissé** invited the delegation to comment on reports that 45 municipalities had imposed curfews specifically targeting Syrian refugees.

25. **Mr. Diaby**, noting that the courts did not yet have a computerized data collection system, said that it would be helpful if the State party could provide the Committee with some data on the number of complaints of racial discrimination that had been brought before the courts in Beirut or another major city based on the paper records of the courts in question.

26. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she would appreciate more information on the progress made towards the establishment of the Academy for Human Encounters and Dialogue and on the content of the human rights curriculum that was taught in schools. In particular, she wondered whether the curriculum included a critical assessment of past strife.

27. **Mr. Amir**, noting that Lebanon was a small country with a very large refugee population, said that the State party had made great progress despite the difficult circumstances that it was facing. When putting questions to the delegation, it was important to bear in mind the situation in the country and to ignore any rhetoric that was intended to divide the people of Lebanon.

28. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen**, noting that the State party's core document dated back to 1996 and therefore contained no recent data, said that he hoped the State party would submit an updated version of its core document together with its next periodic report.

29. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon) said that the establishment of the Academy for Human Encounters and Dialogue was conditional on the conclusion of a multilateral treaty on the initiative. Lebanon was therefore waiting for other countries to engage in the process. In the meantime, it had set up a committee to oversee the establishment of the Academy and had set aside a parcel of land. Despite the various challenges that it was up against, Lebanon remained committed to seeing the project through to completion as soon as possible.

30. **Mr. Ahmad** (Lebanon) said that efforts would be made to provide the Committee with data on the number of complaints of racial discrimination that had been dealt with by courts in Beirut.

31. **Ms. Khoury** (Lebanon) said that, although there was a history curriculum, it was up to individual schools to decide which history textbook they wished to use. They could choose from a set of textbooks that had been selected by a committee of historians. The history curriculum did not cover anything that had happened since 1946.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*