



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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## Human Rights Committee 137th session

### Summary record of the 3961st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 2 March 2023, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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

*Third periodic report of Turkmenistan (continued) (CCPR/C/TKM/3;  
CCPR/C/TKM/Q/3; CCPR/C/TKM/RQ/3)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Turkmenistan joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Turkmenistan**, responding to questions raised at the previous meeting (CCPR/C/SR.3960), said that his delegation did not agree that there were few, if any, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in Turkmenistan. There were numerous voluntary and public organizations that represented a range of interests, such as sports, the sciences and the arts, and they operated independently, managing their own affairs. Since their activities complemented the work of government agencies in meeting certain social needs, the State did all it could to support civil society institutions and cooperated closely with them, including by inviting them to participate in the implementation of important human rights policies and projects in areas such as child protection, gender equality and the elimination of statelessness. The Ministry of Justice had received no applications for registration from any human rights defence organizations. He would welcome specific details of any instances in which applications had been rejected. Applications were given due consideration in accordance with the relevant legislation.
3. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the idea that corruption charges were used as a means of stifling political opposition had no basis in reality. His Government was making efforts to strengthen transparency and build democratic institutions and thereby enhance public trust. Specialists entering the civil service were trained to the highest level of competence, honesty and integrity. To support the democratic transition, various socioeconomic policies and programmes were in place that focused on economic growth and prosperity for the country's citizens.
4. The interdepartmental commission responsible for countering corruption had been set up by presidential decree in 2022, in implementation of measures envisaged in anti-corruption legislation adopted in 2019. The commission's independence and impartiality were demonstrated by the diversity of its membership, which was drawn from law enforcement agencies, government bodies, ministries and the private sector. The commission met at least once every quarter and considered information relevant to the fight against corruption, keeping the public informed via the Internet, television and other media, particularly regarding high-profile cases involving State officials. No one was deemed guilty until a court had so determined and property could be confiscated only on the basis of a court order.
5. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that, as part of its efforts to combat corruption, the Government had created numerous bodies over the past three years, whose members were drawn from public and private entities and did not have close ties to the President. A multilayer system was in place to administer procurement and infrastructure projects. Calls for tender were duly announced and candidates were reviewed by the Supreme Audit Chamber, providing a high-level guarantee of transparency as a safeguard against corruption.
6. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that prior authorization was required for visits to places of detention by the Ombudsman. Most of the persons in detention that had been mentioned at the previous meeting had been released after serving a portion of their sentence. Some had been pardoned, while others had been assigned by the court to a particular place of residence. A certain number had gone on to commit further offences, thereby incurring another custodial sentence.
7. The State party did not accept responsibility for the death in prison of Ms. Muradova. The Procurator General had set up a special investigation group, which had included forensic experts, to review the case, and it had subsequently decided not to bring criminal proceedings in relation to her death. Moreover, a review conducted by several prominent Western States had found that there was no evidence of criminal involvement in her death. The State party did not therefore believe it necessary to conduct any further investigation or expert analysis.

8. Between 2017 and 2023, over 14,000 video cameras had been installed in places of detention. They were under the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and their purpose was to prevent torture and ill-treatment by officials as well as to help officials to monitor detainees. The overall aim was to ensure compliance with the law. The Ministry was also working to ensure that pretrial detention facilities were properly equipped for video and audio recording.

9. **Mr. Haljanov** (Turkmenistan) said that there were no restrictions on special procedure mandate holders visiting the country. As for the consideration of complaints, by law, no petitions brought by persons involved in administrative proceedings could be ignored by government agencies and, in general, no complaint went unanswered. If the complainant was not satisfied with the reply, that was another matter.

10. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that Turkmenistan was still in the process of building up its civil society but that voluntary organizations had been involved in the drafting and implementation of the National Plan of Action on Human Rights. Due consideration would be given to applications for registration by organizations with an interest in human rights, but it was not necessary to create such organizations artificially. It was still too early to assess the outcomes of the road map for preventing domestic violence against women. An evaluation would take place, but there was no empirical data as yet.

11. **Ms. Kran** said that the Committee would appreciate hearing whether, in practice, detainees were permitted access to legal assistance from the time of arrest; how often they were able to communicate with their lawyer; and whether such communication was confidential. She would also be interested to know what complaint procedures and legal remedies were available to a detained person whose right to legal representation was not upheld. As to the oversight of places of detention by the Office of the Ombudsman, she understood that the Ombudsman was the only member of the Office empowered to conduct visits and that visits were not frequent or regular. She would therefore like to know what practical steps the State party was taking to ensure a more effective contribution from the Office to the safeguarding of detainees' rights. She would be particularly interested to know whether the Ombudsman had visited the Ovdan Depe prison, where violations such as torture and arbitrary detention were known to occur, and if not, why not.

12. Recalling with regard to the detention of 18 persons associated with the Hizmet/Gülen movement that, in 2017, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had determined that, since they had been held incommunicado and had been convicted in closed trials without representation or evidence, their detention had been arbitrary, she asked how and when the State party planned to release them and provide reparations, in accordance with the decision of the Working Group.

13. More generally, she would like to know what protection detained persons could expect to receive if they wished to bring a complaint regarding violations of their rights and how the State party ensured that complaints were dealt with promptly and with independent oversight. Noting that, despite existing legal provisions, many detainees, particularly persons detained on politically motivated grounds, were reportedly unable to contact their families, she asked what procedures were in place, or planned, to guarantee that information about the detention and whereabouts of detained persons was effectively communicated to their family members, and how, in practice, the State party ensured that detainees were brought promptly before a court.

14. She would appreciate figures on the number of complaints received from individuals regarding violations of the right to communicate with family members since the Committee's consideration of the State party's second periodic report (CCPR/C/TKM/2), in 2017, and on the number of complaints filed concerning failure to be brought before a court within 48 hours of arrest. In general, what progress had the State party made in ensuring transparency and oversight within its judicial system in cases involving arbitrary arrest and detention? With regard to the right to a prompt trial, she would be interested to know average waiting times between arrest and trial since 2017, and what mechanisms were in place to ensure that trials were conducted without delay.

15. Notwithstanding the adoption of a public policy framework to improve the judicial system, the President retained exclusive authority to appoint, discipline, and dismiss judges.

She would therefore be interested to know what steps had been taken to revise procedures for the appointment of judges in order to ensure their independence in practice. She would also like to hear about any safeguards in place in the judicial system to prevent political interference in the decisions of judges and other officers of the judiciary, and about any mechanisms enabling individuals to bring complaints regarding a lack of judicial independence. Additionally, the delegation might provide information on the training that judges received in the application of international human rights law to rulings at the national level. She wondered whether members of the delegation were familiar with the Manual on Human Rights for Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which might help in raising awareness among the judiciary of the international human rights standards that its officers were expected to apply. In parallel, the OHCHR technical cooperation programme could be a means of obtaining support in setting up training.

16. In the light of numerous reports to the effect that politically motivated criminal trials took place behind closed doors, with severe restrictions on information about detainees' whereabouts and treatment, she would appreciate a description of the legal criteria governing decisions to exclude the public from trials. By way of illustration, she would like to know how the State party justified the closed trial of Mr. Allaberdyev, who was a lawyer by profession, in September 2020. More generally, she would like to know how the State party ensured that its rules were in compliance with article 14 of the Covenant.

17. In the context of the policy framework for the improvement of the judicial system, she would be interested to hear what progress had been made towards ensuring transparency in respect of trials and with regard to the situation of individuals throughout the judicial process. For example, were court rulings published and, if so, where? Given that the number of lawyers in Turkmenistan was very low, and that lawyers often refused to work on politically motivated cases for fear of reprisals, it would be interesting to learn in what proportion of criminal trials conducted since 2017 the defendant had had no legal representation. She would also like to know how many applications for legal aid in criminal cases had been received since 2017; how many had been approved; for what reasons legal aid might be denied; and what structures were in place to ensure that the legal aid system was properly funded and accessible, and that adequate numbers of lawyers were trained.

18. Regarding freedom of association, she wished to know how many associations had appealed a decision of the commission established under the Ministry of Justice to consider registration applications pursuant to the Public Associations Act of 3 May 2014; on what basis appeals had been accepted or rejected; how many applications had been submitted by Jehovah's Witnesses; how many of those applications had been denied and on what grounds; whether the State party planned to adopt measures to ensure that any restrictions on registration were necessary and prescribed by law, in line with article 22 of the Covenant; what would be done to promote the participation of civil society organizations in monitoring human rights and reporting and facilitating progress thereon; whether the State party intended to review relevant legislative and regulatory processes to ensure that truly independent civil society organizations were able to operate; and whether the ban on international NGOs entering the country would be lifted.

19. The Committee had received reports of international human rights defenders and their families being targeted and harassed by the State party. With that in mind, it would be helpful to know how many Turkmen citizens had been extradited to Turkmenistan since 2017 and on what charges; how many complaints of extraterritorial harassment had been filed against members of the police or security services; whether such complaints had been investigated; and, if so, what the outcome had been.

20. **Ms. Bassim** said that she would be interested to receive information on the mechanisms in place to monitor detention conditions in the State party and guarantee minimum standards of comfort, space and hygiene; the established protocol for inspection visits by the national authorities; the frequency of such visits; and whether any were conducted unannounced. She invited the delegation to indicate whether NGOs were permitted to visit places of detention; what administrative conditions they had to fulfil in order to do so; whether private interviews were conducted with random prisoners or detainees to hear their views; and, if so, what follow-up was given to any issues raised.

21. She would be grateful for a response from the delegation to reports of extreme corruption in prisons with regard to visiting rights and access to medical care and food, and of packages sent to inmates by their families not being delivered or being stolen. She would also appreciate details of the complaints mechanisms in place for detainees, the criteria used to determine which complaints were followed up, the action taken if complaints were upheld and the measures adopted to ensure that the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty was compatible with the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 21. An explanation as to why the International Committee of the Red Cross was not permitted to carry out regular visits to detention facilities would also be welcome.

22. It would be useful to know what measures had been imposed on detainees during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and whether the new health standards introduced in places of detention during the pandemic would be maintained.

23. Drawing attention to paragraph 41 of the Committee's concluding observations on the State party's second periodic report (CCPR/C/TKM/CO/2), regarding the right to conscientious objection to military service, she asked what steps had been taken to revise domestic legislation in line with the Committee's recommendations; how many persons had been arrested, convicted or otherwise punished for conscientious objection since 2017; and what alternative service of a civilian nature was available to enable conscientious objectors to fulfil their national duty.

24. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she would be grateful for further clarification regarding the President's involvement in the work of the interministerial anti-corruption commission, bearing in mind reports that lucrative State contracts had been awarded to persons close to him.

25. Turning to the issues of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking, she asked what follow-up had been given to the virtual and in-person visits carried out by the supervisory bodies of the International Labour Organization to monitor compliance with labour standards; whether the road map proposed after a November 2022 visit had been developed and ratified; what measures were planned to put an end to forced labour, including in the cotton sector; what reforms were envisaged in that sector aside from the mechanization of production, which had brought little tangible progress; and what policies were in place to identify and protect trafficking victims and effectively combat trafficking in persons.

26. Concerning freedom of movement, it would be interesting to know whether there were plans to scrap the mandatory residence registration system (*propiska*); whether detailed, up-to-date information was available on travel bans imposed on human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and students; and whether, with the pandemic under control, the State party would restore its normal policy on the issuance and validity of passports and lift the requirement for migrant workers to have a visa in order to work in Türkiye.

27. **Mr. El Haiba** said that, regarding the right to privacy, he would appreciate a description of the legal safeguards in place to regulate State surveillance activities and a response to allegations of targeted surveillance of journalists and human rights defenders, including Natalya Shabunts and Soltan Achilova, and of persons with contacts or relatives abroad. It would be useful to receive detailed, up-to-date information on investigations into cases of targeted surveillance, their outcomes and the redress mechanisms available to victims.

28. On freedom of expression, he wished to know what specific measures had been taken to implement article 42 of the Constitution and the Media Act (2012); whether data were available on efforts to promote citizens' uncensored, unhindered, affordable and timely access to various sources of information, including the Internet; what measures had been taken or were envisaged to bring the Act on the Legal Regulation of the Development of the Internet and Internet Services in Turkmenistan (2014) fully into line with international standards; what had been done to protect citizens' right to access foreign sources of information through private television and radio satellite dishes; and why there had been a failure to respect the rights of citizens based inside and outside the country to peacefully express their views on the situation in Turkmenistan, defend their rights and those of their fellow citizens and engage with like-minded people on issues affecting them.

29. He would welcome the delegation's thoughts on allegations that meetings of political parties were monitored and that, under national law, anyone who opposed, criticized or disagreed with the Government was regarded as a traitor and, consequently, risked intimidation or even imprisonment. He would be grateful for information on the measures taken to prevent the persecution of members of civil society and their families; an indication as to whether Nurgeldy Khalykov, Murat Dushemov and Mansur Mingelov would be released in view of the unfounded charges against them; an update on efforts to protect the three men's health and well-being behind bars; and information on the status and whereabouts of Azat Isakov.

30. With regard to freedom of peaceful assembly, he would be interested to know why the State party's authorities continued to exercise wide discretion over the organization of public gatherings; how many requests to hold gatherings had been received, accepted and rejected since the entry into force of the Organization and Conduct of Gatherings, Meetings, Demonstrations and Other Mass Events Act (2015); whether information was available on the designation and use of authorized venues for assemblies; how the State party guaranteed residents' right to hold spontaneous demonstrations without intimidation or interference; and whether it could provide assurances that it would not attempt to restrict the right of citizens living abroad to hold peaceful demonstrations on issues of concern to them in their home country. Lastly, he wished to receive details of the measures adopted to ensure that any restrictions on freedom of assembly complied with the strict requirements of article 21 of the Covenant, that participation in mass events organized by the authorities was voluntary, and that there were no reprisals for non-participation.

31. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he wished to know whether the State party would take steps to guarantee the effective exercise of freedom of religion and belief in practice, refrain from imposing any limitations that went beyond those provided for in article 18 of the Covenant and bring its legislation and practice into conformity with that article. He invited the delegation to explain why certain religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, had been denied legal recognition and registration, and to indicate whether the State party would ensure that the registration of religious organizations was based on clear, objective criteria that were compatible with its obligations under the Covenant.

32. He would appreciate a response from the delegation to reports that, on several occasions in 2022, Jehovah's Witnesses had been summoned by law enforcement officers or interrogated at their places of work and told not to engage in "illegal activities" by meeting with fellow believers or sharing their beliefs. A description of the steps it envisaged taking to put an end to such arbitrary detentions and interrogations and to interference with the activities of religious communities would also be welcome.

33. In the light of reported shortcomings in the election process, he wished to know how the State party guaranteed free, reliable and transparent elections and created an enabling environment for private and independent media to encourage free speech and access to information. Clarification was also required as to how it would ensure the independence and impartiality of the Central Election Committee and broaden its membership to include civil society and other organizations. He would welcome information on the review of electoral legislation, including an indication of how it addressed the Committee's recommendations and the aspects on which it was focused. Noting that the review apparently encompassed the possibility of granting voting rights to prisoners, he asked whether such a step would meet the standard of proportionality and would be based on the nature of prisoners' offences and the length of their sentences.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.*

34. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that consultations on the transposition into national legislation of article 21 of the Covenant, on the right to peaceful assembly, were planned. However, no requests to hold public gatherings had been received from any group. The views of individual civil society representatives and citizens were heard by local authorities three times each week, and the outcomes of those discussions were published in the press. Participation in mass events organized by the Government was voluntary.

35. Lists had been published of the almost 15,000 candidates who were standing in the elections to be held in March 2023. Those candidates had been nominated in accordance with

national legislation and international standards and enjoyed equal opportunities to campaign and meet voters and the media. Similarly, the country's three political parties were afforded equal opportunity to promote their candidates and to take an active part in elections. The electoral process was monitored by government bodies and international organizations, and around 3,000 observers had been registered for the upcoming elections, including observers from foreign media organizations. Voting would take place using digital technology on a single day, to encourage voter turnout.

36. **Mr. Haljanov** (Turkmenistan) said that the Government had been cooperating with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, most recently in October 2021, when it had communicated detailed responses to questions received. It also cooperated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and would be hosting a delegation from ILO in March 2023. The ILO Conference Committee on the Application of Standards had noted the progress made on labour law, particularly in the area of forced labour, and the Government had made a proposal to ILO regarding a concept note on cooperation in recruitment for the cotton harvest. It was also considering the ratification of the ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81) and the creation of a national monitoring mechanism for manual labour.

37. As part of a trilateral project with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, work was being done to harness the potential for cooperation between the Government and the Government of Türkiye in the development of a national strategy on the cotton harvest that would address gender, protection measures and mechanical harvesting techniques. The Government did not have a policy of forced labour during the cotton harvest, or in any other area of the agricultural sector; indeed, its use of modern technology meant that significant human resources were unnecessary. An external audit of companies involved in the cotton harvest had been undertaken in 2016.

38. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the population had enjoyed freedom of movement throughout the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including internationally. Thousands of foreign nationals had been assisted in returning to their countries of origin, and Turkmen citizens residing abroad during the pandemic had been assisted in remaining in contact with their families, sending remittances and using consular services. The validity of their identity documents had been extended, along with the validity of the passports of foreign nationals temporarily resident in Turkmenistan, a measure that would continue until 2024. Several thousand passports had been issued to Turkmen citizens during the pandemic.

39. It was not true that Internet access was lacking in Turkmenistan. It was available at an affordable price across the country, albeit at varying speeds, and the number of users was growing. Usage had increased particularly quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. High-quality cable and Internet protocol television and streaming services were available, and State-owned and private media outlets operated throughout the country. Social media use was increasing, as were partnerships with international media outlets and the granting of media accreditation. A media centre for foreign journalists had been set up. The Government's commitment to providing information accessible to all was demonstrated by its ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. Allegations of attacks, reprisals, intimidation and arbitrary arrests targeting journalists, human rights defenders, political dissidents and their families were unfounded; no journalists had ever been prosecuted for their work. Many journalists, including foreign journalists and bloggers, participated in events, and the Government recognized their role.

40. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the prison sentences handed down to the 18 persons linked to the Hizmet/Gülen movement complied with the law and had followed an independent, impartial investigation and the proper court proceedings. There were therefore no grounds to grant reparations. There was no evidence that disappearances among journalists were increasing. Court cases such as the one involving Mr. Allaberdyev were held behind closed doors, and his lawyer had participated in the trial. Corruption in prisons was not increasing, and there was no theft from prisoners. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, prisons had been equipped with disinfecting equipment and personal protective

equipment, and personal hygiene measures had been enhanced. Almost all prisoners had received three doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

41. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that trafficking in persons was not widespread in Turkmenistan and had represented just 0.03 per cent of legal cases registered in 2019 and 2020, with no cases recorded in 2021 or 2022. Nevertheless, specific legislation that addressed the crime had been adopted in 2010 and amended in 2016, while abduction and other matters linked to trafficking were addressed in other laws. Prohibited acts linked to trafficking, such as the concealment and sale of persons, were expressly addressed in the new Criminal Code. The Procurator General was responsible for coordinating Government efforts to combat the crime and prosecute its perpetrators, and a range of measures were in place to rehabilitate victims. Consideration was being given to a third national plan to combat the phenomenon with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration, which also helped voluntary associations in identifying and assisting victims.

42. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that bar associations ensured the proper conduct of their members. Ample legal assistance was available to the public, for example at free consultations held twice monthly by the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Procurator General and lawyers, which in 2022 had assisted 875 persons. The Ministry of Justice also held consultations twice a week. More than 1,000 religious organizations, including 100 Muslim organizations, were registered with the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, 135 public organizations were registered, including academic organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities. Applications for registration could be rejected if the relevant legal conditions were not met. Rejections could be appealed in court, but no organization had as yet done so.

43. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that non-discrimination in access to legal assistance and the principles of the presumption of innocence and equality of arms were enshrined in national law. The violation of legal safeguards and procedural and other rights was a punishable offence, for which the penalty was harsher when perpetrators were public officials. Many categories of cases were not subject to detention. Legal aid was available, and in recent years the proportion of defendants availing themselves of the service had risen to over 30 per cent. The number of people taking advantage of legal advice services had also been rising, with around 1,700 citizens benefiting. Training for justice officials was having a positive impact on legal proceedings and the quality of court decisions. Similarly, public confidence in the judiciary had risen following the first-ever conference of judges, organized with a view to enhancing judicial integrity. Justice in Turkmenistan was administered in accordance with national and international legal standards.

44. International obligations were incorporated into national legislation. For instance, the principle that only actions that were offences under the Criminal Code could be prosecuted was enshrined in the Constitution. During the reporting period, 35 guilty verdicts had been handed down in draft-dodging cases, though the number of such cases had dwindled to none in 2022. The criminal records of persons convicted of minor or moderate offences were fully expunged two years after completion of the sentence.

45. **Mr. Hajiye**v (Turkmenistan) said that the number of complaints lodged against Turkmenistan, both with the United Nations treaty bodies and other mechanisms, had been decreasing since 2017, and that the Government stood ready to work with the Committee on specific individual communications. While the claim that companies belonging to relatives of the President had an advantage in public procurement processes was untrue, it was worth noting that everyone was entitled to exercise their rights regardless of family ties.

46. The Central Election Committee was considering authorizing persons convicted of minor offences to exercise the right to vote. Persons in police custody were already permitted to do so. Technical consultations were held with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights after every election, and its recommendations were taken seriously, as would the Committee's in that domain.

47. Progress was being made in realizing the right to freedom of religion, as was reflected in the falling number of complaints being submitted in that connection. Allegations that unregistered religious groups, such as, for instance, Jehovah's Witnesses, could not practise their beliefs and were discriminated against were unfounded. The Government had met with



representatives of religious organizations, irrespective of registration status, prior to the dialogue with the Committee to discuss questions and concerns. In the specific case of Jehovah's Witnesses, alternatives to military service in combat units had been found, and all 44 individuals who had refused to perform their military service had been acquitted or pardoned.

48. Dialogue, including as part of bilateral cooperation efforts, regarding so-called disappeared persons was bearing fruit. The Government was prepared to consider the release of Mr. Khalykov, Mr. Dushemov and Mr. Mingelov. As for Mr. Isakov, he was home with his family, while Mr. Allaberdyev had had unimpeded access to a lawyer and had been released. The Government was forthcoming with other States and international organizations about persons feared disappeared, many of whom turned out not to be missing but were in fact living abroad or even working as public servants. Unsubstantiated allegations should therefore be avoided.

49. The Government saw no need to scrap the system of mandatory registration (*propiska*) with the Ministry of Labour, as the measure enabled it to protect labour rights. Similarly, the visa requirement for persons wishing to work in Türkiye did not restrict freedom of movement; on the contrary, it made the Turkish authorities and employers accountable for those persons' rights and safety.

50. **Mr. El Haiba** said that he had not received a response regarding the restrictions on access to the Internet ushered in by the Act on the Legal Regulation of the Development of the Internet and Internet Services in Turkmenistan. He pointed out that replacing the satellite network with a cable television network would considerably reduce access to information, especially information from foreign sources.

51. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she welcomed the State party's acceptance of a visit by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, noting that it would be useful for the visit to take place before the next cotton harvest in August. She would appreciate a more detailed response to her questions regarding mandatory registration and the reinstatement of the visa requirement for individuals wishing to work in Türkiye.

52. **Mr. Yigezu** asked what requirements religious organizations had to meet in order to be registered and which such organizations had had their registration requests denied.

53. **Ms. Kran** said that she would welcome an update on the situations of the individuals included on the Prove They Are Alive list of disappeared persons, as well as a response to her questions about the rationale for holding closed trials, the availability of an accessible appeals procedure for organizations whose registration was denied, the possibility for detainees to communicate with their families, the Ombudsman's ability to visit Ovadan Depe prison and the State party's intention to implement the Views that the Committee had adopted in individual communications concerning Turkmenistan.

54. **Mr. Hajiyev** (Turkmenistan) said that the Ombudsman did not visit Ovadan Depe prison and that the resumption of visits by the Red Cross was contingent on the negotiation of a new bilateral agreement. Mandatory registration was a mere formality intended to help protect individuals' labour rights and did not restrict their freedom of movement or right to employment. The shift to a cable television network would provide more channels for the population. More work was needed between the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva and OHCHR in order to overcome the difference of opinion as to the status of implementation of the Committee's Views. Further responses would be submitted to the Committee in writing, and he was confident that the dialogue with the Committee, as that with other treaty bodies, would lead to progress in Turkmenistan.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*