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Chairperson: Ms. Majodina

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant

*Third periodic report of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CCPR/C/IRN/3;
CCPR/C/IRN/Q/3 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Sajjadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation looked forward to holding a beneficial and constructive dialogue with the Committee. His Government, inspired by the exalted teachings of Islam, the Constitution and international instruments, had attached the greatest importance to the promotion of human rights in its goals and programmes. As detailed in paragraphs 2 and 3 of its third periodic report, the will of the people, expressed through both direct and indirect voting, was instrumental in the functioning of the State. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 there had been at least one general election each year, with voter turnouts usually higher than regional and international averages.
3. In the view of his Government, the key indicators of human rights promotion were national measures to institutionalize the human rights process and to uphold human rights. In taking fundamental steps to promote and protect human rights, his Government had focused on three areas: legislative reform, capacity-building and awareness-raising. Extensive national and international efforts had been made with international technical and advisory assistance and bilateral cooperation, utilizing domestic capacities; they had resulted in strengthened domestic institutions that more effectively promoted and protected human rights. In order to pursue the process, many effective measures had been put in place. Examples included the signing of an advisory and technical assistance agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the inclusion of human rights in school curriculums and the September 2007 visit of Ms. Louise Arbour, then High Commissioner for Human Rights, to the Islamic Republic of Iran. His Government was also working with OHCHR to prepare for a visit by the current High Commissioner and had seen positive results from bilateral dialogues on human rights with various countries, including Japan, Switzerland, Australia and Russia, as well as four rounds of human rights dialogue with the European Union.
4. Human rights initiatives instituted by his Government were outlined in paragraph 13 of the periodic report and included a number of actions at the international and regional levels. His Government was also a signatory to a number of international human rights instruments, as detailed in the report and the written replies, and had worked to fulfil its obligations in that respect in the context of divine Islamic laws, the Constitution and other national codes. Evidence of that commitment could be seen in the submission of periodic reports to a number of human rights bodies.
5. His country's third periodic report had been compiled in collaboration with all the relevant domestic organs and submitted to the Committee in October 2009. It was aimed at providing a brief description of the legislative, judicial and executive measures and initiatives taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran to promote human rights within the context of its obligations under the Covenant. Following the 101st session of the Committee, a list of questions had been prepared and transmitted to his Government; the judiciary's human rights council, working with the relevant domestic organizations, had produced replies and punctually submitted them to the Office of the High Commissioner.
6. **Mr. Hakeeme** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that developing a culture of human rights was a noble objective and an important element in mankind's common heritage. In order to achieve that objective, multilateral and international cooperation was crucial, as

were tolerance and an understanding of cultural and societal differences. The high-level delegation presenting the periodic report was evidence of the importance that his Government attached to the work of the Human Rights Committee, as was the Iranian committee established to respond to the Committee's written questions. As described in the report, the Islamic Republic of Iran was a religious democracy based on the teachings of Islam with a Constitution that mapped out the future path of the country and, in articles 19–46 in particular, guaranteed human rights and fundamental freedoms.

7. The judiciary was independent of both the legislative and executive branches, and all people were afforded equal rights before the law. The prohibition of torture and holding public trials were basic principles of the legal and judicial systems, and paragraphs 153–156 of the report recounted the establishment of the Human Rights Headquarters.

8. Noting the country's history of submitting reports to various United Nations bodies, and specifically listing the reports and written submissions that had been prepared for the Committee over the years, he said that, following the 1979 Revolution, the overall policy of his country had been one of cooperation with the United Nations. His delegation hoped that the Committee would take the official religion of his country, Islam, into account during its consideration of the periodic report and that political approaches would be avoided.

9. As a founding Member of the United Nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran respected all its fundamental principles, in accordance with the Constitution. A number of legal reforms and amendments had been introduced in domestic legislation in order to ensure respect for human rights and the provisions of the Covenant. He listed a number of bills and amendments that were at various stages of the approval process, including a bill on alternatives to prison sentences, a bill establishing a supervisory body to monitor the actions of law enforcement agencies and amendments to regulations aimed at promoting the independence of the judiciary.

10. With the establishment of the Human Rights Headquarters, among other measures, the country was building further capacity in the domain of human rights: the Human Rights Headquarters was based in Tehran, but also had regional offices; a dispute resolution council had been established and approved by the Guardian Council; and offices to promote the rights of women and children had been created under the supervision of the judiciary in every province.

11. The Prosecutor's Office had been revived in 1981 and separate courts had been established for civil and criminal affairs. Court bailiffs had been appointed in every province in order to monitor the exercise of human rights. Parliament had taken measures to follow up complaints lodged by the public, a national headquarters for women had been established – with the President and the Vice-President among its members, and a headquarters to protect citizens' rights had also been established and was represented in all provinces.

12. His country was active on the international stage, particularly within the United Nations system; it had invited submissions on the national situation with regard to human rights, had promoted dialogue on human rights with other countries and was planning to hold a special meeting on human rights in cooperation with OHCHR, to be attended by Iranian officials and academics.

13. Measures had been taken to create a culture of human rights awareness, including the dissemination of interviews and information in the media and the establishment of a human rights information centre that offered information in English and Persian. The judiciary's department of public relations also provided relevant information. Human rights were a subject of education and research, and officials and academics had attended several conferences on the subject. A plan had been drawn up to increase public awareness of human rights and information had been provided to national human rights think tanks.

14. His was a diverse country encompassing different ethnic groups that lived together peacefully, and the Government had taken a number of measures to maintain that peace. All Iranian citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity, benefited equally from the law.

15. It should be borne in mind that his country was a victim of terrorism, actions aimed at increasing terrorist activity and acts impeding the country's progress, such as the assassination of Iranian atomic scientists. It was also a victim of the narcotics trade and certain States had recently attempted to increase the flow of narcotics into the country. The statistics available and the questions raised by the Committee indicated that the number of executions in the country was high, but 70 per cent of executions were for drug offences. The country was also suffering as a result of belligerent, unilateral sanctions.

16. **Mr. Iwasawa** said that, although he regretted the 18-year gap between the previous periodic report and the report under consideration, he was pleased to note that the Islamic Republic of Iran was engaging in dialogue with the Committee and had provided prompt written responses to the Committee's list of issues. Referring to the State party's written replies to question 1 of the list of issues (CCPR/C/IRN/Q/3/Add.1), he asked for further information on exactly how the Covenant had been used in the case relating to contaminated blood by both the courts and the parties to the case, and for further examples in which the Covenant had been invoked before the courts. It would also be useful to know where treaties were situated in the Iranian legal order and whether domestic legislation or international treaties took precedence in the event of conflict between the two.

17. The State party's core document, submitted in 1999, said that, according to the Constitution and the Civil Code, "international instruments influence legislation and the implementation of laws" (HRI/CORE/1/Add.106, para. 81). Clarification of how international treaties influenced domestic legislation would be appreciated. Information on the effect of advisory opinion 7/1669 allowing direct reference to be made to international instruments during court proceedings (*ibid.*, para. 82), would also be useful, including information on whether there had been an increase in references to such instruments in domestic courts as a result of that advisory opinion and whether it was well known among lawyers.

18. The State party's written replies had not answered the Committee's question as to how article 4 of the Constitution, requiring legislation and other instruments to be based on Islamic criteria, was consistent with the provisions of the Covenant.

19. **Mr. Flinterman** said that he had been concerned, on reading the State party's detailed report, about the lack of examples of practical implementation of the Covenant. The equality of men and women was a core principle and cornerstone of the United Nations human rights system, as shown in the preamble and provisions of the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee had noted in 1993 that measures had been taken to improve the status of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran but that persistent discrimination against women remained. Issues included the status of women under the Civil Code, the application of a dress code for women and the ban on women practising sports in public. Information was requested on the *de facto* status and enjoyment of human rights of women of all ages, and their levels of education and sexual orientation. One visible step that could have been taken by the State party was ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He wondered why it had hesitated on that matter, especially given that the equality of men and women was emphasized in the Constitution and that the Convention could be seen as a substantiation of article 3 of the Covenant.

20. The fact, detailed in the periodic report, that women constituted the majority of students at higher education institutes was to be welcomed, although it did raise concerns that the lower number of male students indicated that men were reluctant to attend such

institutes. The Committee had received information reporting a decrease in the number of girls in higher education in 2011 due to the introduction of quotas, and further alleging that men and women were segregated in some higher-education institutes. Further information on the situation of men and women in higher education and an indication of how that situation was compatible with article 3 of the Covenant would be appreciated.

21. A key way to improve the position and status of women was to include women in decision-making and in judicial dispute settlement. Information on measures in place to encourage women to seek high-level and decision-making positions, and to stand for election to parliament would be welcome. He noted that the current percentage of women in parliament was the lowest in the history of the country and that most women in decision-making positions were involved in the Ministry of Education, which, despite being a marker of progress, risked further stereotyping women as educators. It would be useful to know what steps were being taken to encourage women to take up positions in other ministries.

22. The written replies to the list of issues stated that a number of female judges had been appointed in recent years, although it was unclear from the description of their duties what their responsibilities actually were. He invited the State party to reply to question 2 of the list of issues as to why women could not act as presiding judges.

23. The Committee had been informed that Iranian women had been peacefully seeking changes in discriminatory legislation, for example through the One Million Signatures Campaign, but that many of the women involved had been charged with security offences, had been detained without access to legal advice or contact with their families and had suffered ill-treatment. He would welcome further details of the Government's policy in that respect. The 2007 Programme for Social Safety targeted women's dress in public areas and the Committee had been informed that over 17,000 police officers had been placed on the streets to arrest women who were considered to be improperly dressed. The Committee had also received reliable reports that women had been arrested for that offence even on private premises. He asked how the State party's implementation of that programme was considered to be consistent with the Covenant.

24. Violence against women, including domestic violence, had been recognized by the international community as a form of discrimination against women and of unequal treatment of women and men, meaning that the obligation of States parties to prevent violence against women was fully within the scope of article 3 of the Covenant. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences had issued detailed recommendations to the Islamic Republic of Iran following her visit to the country in 2005, including the prioritization of the elimination of violence against women. It was, however, unclear whether concrete measures had been taken to prevent violence against women, provide appropriate support networks and follow up the report of the Special Rapporteur. It would be interesting to know whether the Government envisaged the introduction of specific legislation on violence against women and domestic violence, whether any cases relating to violence against women had been brought before the courts and what verdicts had been handed down in any such cases. Although the State party had indicated in its written replies that article 630 of the Islamic Penal Code was rarely applied in practice and acted rather as a deterrent, the provision appeared to be incompatible with its obligations under articles 3 and 6 of the Covenant.

25. The State party's response to question 3 of the list of issues indicated that a number of legislative provisions that discriminated against women were still in existence. In that regard, he asked whether the Family Protection Bill referred to during the delegation's presentation would address all the existing inequalities in family protection legislation, such as the provision allowing a man to prohibit his wife from working. He further asked whether it was correct to assume, as information received by the Committee indicated, that

the new legislation would create new inequalities, such as provisions that would allow a man to take a second wife, facilitate temporary marriage, maximize the amount of dowries and maintain certain fixed ages for the marriage of women.

26. **Ms. Chanet** said that human rights were universal and therefore could not be derogated from or limited in any way except as provided for by the Covenant. The written replies to the list of issues received by the Committee had been rather short, obliging her to ask further questions. The Committee would appreciate detailed statistical data on the number of executions and the crimes for which a capital sentence was handed down, as requested in question 6 of the list of issues. Information on the exact crimes for which the death penalty was applied would also be welcome and, given the reference in the interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran (A/HRC/16/75) to an increase in convictions for *Mohareb* (terrorist) offences, she asked what exactly was included under that category.

27. The Covenant recognized the possible use of capital punishment for the most serious crimes. However, the written replies indicated that capital punishment was applied as a penalty for religious or moral offences, i.e. for matters of personal behaviour. That was at odds with the international community's view of what constituted serious crimes. Article 18 of the Covenant guaranteed absolute freedom of thought, conscience and religion, indicating that offences of the nature described could not be considered most serious in the light of the Covenant and that the use of the death penalty in such cases was in contravention of fundamental rights. The situation regarding homosexuality was similar: despite the adoption in June 2011 of a Human Rights Council resolution on human rights and sexual orientation, death sentences continued to be pronounced for homosexuality.

28. Information in the Secretary-General's interim report indicated that the moratorium on juvenile executions was not being respected. Given that a recommendation had been made following the universal periodic review process to abolish juvenile executions in Iran, and given that no reservation had been made on that matter, such executions were in violation of the Covenant. Information in response to the Committee's question on the continuing practice of stoning as a method of execution would be appreciated, as would details of the various methods of execution that were employed. For example, did crucifixion continue to be practised, and who decided which method was employed? Was it the courts or the judge? She asked whether executions were public and who decided that matter. Information on procedures guaranteeing a fair trial to all and on the right of appeal for all persons sentenced to execution would also be useful. Noting that the information submitted by the State party, in relation to article 6 of the Covenant, had not been sufficient, despite the reporting obligations imposed by the Covenant under article 40, she looked forward to receiving more detailed information on the matters raised.

29. **Ms. Motoc** said that she was concerned at delays to draft amendments to the Penal Code that would remove the definition of *mahdoor-ol-dam* (deserving of death) that was applied to some crimes, and at the fact that such amendments would not affect the primacy of sharia, under which the concept of *mahdoor-ol-dam* would still be applicable. Reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) indicated that there continued to be a level of impunity for certain crimes when the phrase *mahdoor-ol-dam* was invoked.

30. Detailed allegations, including an audio-visual recording of an execution, had been received by the Committee indicating that, during and following the presidential elections of 12 June 2009, approximately 100 people had been subjected to torture or killed, or had simply disappeared at the hands of security forces and militia groups acting with impunity. More detailed information, as requested in question 9 of the list of issues, on the action taken against those responsible for killings and ill-treatment and the number of victims would be appreciated. The delegation was also invited to comment on the possibility that high-level officials involved in the events of 2009 were treated with impunity and on the

identification of those responsible for ill-treatment during those events. It was also invited to provide detailed information on investigations into a number of events and demonstrations that had led to alleged disappearances and extrajudicial killings since the 1980s. Further information was requested on the issues relating to honour crimes, in particular the number of women who, according to the 2005 report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2006/61/Add.3), had performed self-immolation because they had been victims of an honour crime.

31. The issue of protection for sexual minorities certainly came under the remit of the Committee and she expressed concern that the State party did not offer protection to sexual minorities, which was in contravention of article 26 of the Covenant and also article 17 on unlawful interference with privacy, which covered consensual sex. Homosexuality was severely punished, inter alia with the death penalty, and the Committee had also received reports that individuals who had participated in political demonstrations had been charged and imprisoned for alleged homosexuality. Information would also be appreciated regarding allegations transmitted to the Committee that homosexuals had been forced to undergo sex change surgery.

32. **Mr. Neuman** noted that, according to the State party's reply to question 11 of the list of issues, there had been 13 cases of alleged torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by police officers or prison staff since 2007, all of which had resulted in conviction. That was an extraordinarily low number relative to the size of the population, and raised the concern that police and prison staff might have nothing to fear from engaging in those practices. He asked whether victims were afraid to complain, whether officials who received such complaints did not take them seriously enough to record them, or whether there were other explanations for the low number of investigations. It would be useful to know what steps the State party was taking to identify cases of such treatment and ensure that they were properly investigated and punished. In that regard, he wished to know whether professionally competent investigations were carried out by impartial medical personnel into reports of the sexual abuse of female and male detainees.

33. While it was interesting to hear that the proposed reform of Tazirat law would reduce the number of offences for which corporal punishment was prescribed, the Committee was primarily interested in existing legislation. Information had been received indicating that flogging was still used as a punishment for minor offences, including reports that the actress Marzieh Vafamehr had been sentenced to 90 lashes merely for appearing in a film. Echoing the request in question 12 of the list of issues, he asked for statistics on the number of times the punishments of amputation and flogging had been imposed and for what crimes, because without such data the Committee was forced to rely on external reports. In 1993, the Committee had concluded that such punishments were inconsistent with article 7 of the Covenant. While the imposition of corporal punishment was based on religious doctrine in some cases, he failed to understand why it continued to be imposed for other crimes.

34. The State party's reply to question 13 indicated that general and blanket arrest warrants, which did not contain the names of the accused and were not based on a judge's review of material evidence, were illegal and that anyone making an arrest under such a warrant faced legal sanctions. He asked whether the State party planned to release and compensate the individuals who had reportedly been arrested recently under such warrants and punish the persons who had made the arrests. It would be useful to know whether anyone had ever been punished for making an arrest under such a general warrant and whether any allegations of such arrests were being investigated. In that connection, the Committee would appreciate an explanation of the functions of the auxiliary law enforcement forces, such as the Basij, including whether they had the legal authority to

make arrests, hold people in detention and impose corporal punishment without trial. In particular, information should be provided on measures taken to ensure that those forces' activities remained within the bounds of the law and were consistent with the provisions of the Covenant.

35. Turning to the reply to question 14, he requested clarification as to whether the periods of one and four months within which examining judges were bound to deal with the situations of individuals held under a temporary arrest warrant constituted the maximum periods of pretrial detention. It would be useful to know whether the accused could be held for longer under any circumstances, such as if the judge extended the detention order, and if so, whether there was any time limit within which the trial had to take place. He asked whether detainees had access to attorneys to challenge their detention before being brought to court and before facing interrogation. It would be useful to know at exactly what moment arrested suspects became entitled to access to a lawyer. He also requested data on the number of people currently held in pretrial detention and the average length of such detention.

36. It was unclear whether all the sections of Evin prison, including sections 2A, 209, 240 and 350, were run and managed by the Prisons, Safeguarding and Educational Measures Organization, or whether some sections were controlled by the Ministry of Intelligence or the intelligence services of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. The Committee would appreciate clarification on whether all places of detention used by the Ministry of Intelligence and other intelligence services for the interrogation of detainees were under the control of the Prisons, Safeguarding and Educational Measures Organization. He would welcome an indication of whether the Ministry of Intelligence used other sites to conduct interrogations, be they temporary sites or sites whose location was not publicly disclosed. While the State party had indicated in paragraph 76 (b) of its written replies that prisons had no role whatsoever in interrogation, it was clear that the interrogation of detainees played an important part in the criminal justice system and potentially raised serious human rights concerns. It was therefore necessary for the Committee to ascertain who was in control of the places where detainees were interrogated and what efforts were made to prevent ill-treatment of detainees who were being interrogated. He would welcome information on whether any arrested persons had been held incommunicado in recent years in locations that had not been disclosed to their families or attorneys.

37. He asked whether there had been any cases in which judges had excluded confessions on the grounds that they had been obtained through coercion. Were there investigations into defendants' claims that confessions had been coerced by beatings, sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme temperatures or other forms of abuse, or did judges ignore them?

38. Given that the written reply to question 16 appeared to exclude detention centres where people were interrogated, he wished to know whether the inspection duties of the prosecutor mentioned in the reply extended to those centres. Given that monitoring by the office of the prosecutor could not be considered independent, since prosecutors had an interest in securing confessions, he asked whether the State party planned to introduce a more independent method of monitoring prisons and other places of detention.

39. The Committee had received reports indicating that solitary confinement was frequently practised, possibly as an inhuman interrogation technique. He asked whether the State party could provide statistics to support its claim in the reply to question 16 that solitary confinement was rarely used. If that was not the case, was the State party willing to place and enforce stringent legal limitations on the use and length of solitary confinement in order to ensure that it was rare and used when only strictly necessary?

40. The dismissive statement in paragraph 76 (f) of the written replies that prisoners enjoyed easier access to medical services than persons outside prisons was inconsistent with an understanding of basic human rights principles and the duty that Governments owed to persons they had deprived of liberty. He asked whether prison and other officials were trained in human rights principles concerning conditions of detention, such as the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The conditions in many of the State party's prisons raised concerns under article 10 of the Covenant, even if they were the result of insufficient funding and unintended neglect. However, deliberately subjecting certain prisoners to unhealthy conditions and artificially limiting their access to medical care as a form of punishment or coercion to confess amounted to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, which was prohibited under article 7 of the Covenant. There were allegations that some of those conditions were imposed deliberately in certain sections of Evin prison. He invited the delegation to give an undertaking that those problems would be immediately addressed in order to dispel such concerns.

41. **Mr. Salvioli** said it was disappointing that the Committee's concerns which had been expressed in its concluding observations of 1993 had, on the whole, not been addressed. The written reply to question 1 of the list of issues gave only one example of a case in which the Covenant had been invoked before domestic courts over the previous 18 years. He therefore asked whether judges were trained in the specific provisions of the Covenant and if so, whether the State party was satisfied with the results of that training. While the delegation had confirmed that women could now become judges, there had been reports that, if the draft legislation on the family was approved, women would be allowed to act as judges in family courts only. Given that those courts were apparently still presided over by men, he failed to see how women's right to act as judges in family courts was compatible with the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in the Covenant. He also asked why consensual homosexual acts were subject to prosecution, since that was a violation of the Covenant.

42. **Mr. Thelin** said that his reading of the State party's Constitution had led him to conclude that its legal system was a theocracy, judging from the numerous references to divine principles and the religious dogma of Islam. He therefore wondered whether those references might inhibit the judiciary from exercising its functions in accordance with the Covenant. It was widely recognized that in Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Third Reich, the courts and interpretations of law had been subservient to the higher ideologies of Communism and Nazi ideology. He was loath to think that the references to divine principles in the State party's Constitution could give rise to the same interrelationship between higher dogma and the universality of the Covenant in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Article 61 of the Constitution, for example, made reference to the criteria of Islam and divine limits. Paragraph 30 of the periodic report described the overall policies of the judiciary, including setting Islamic criteria for all judicial affairs in order to ensure the proper operation of the judiciary. Article 167 of the Constitution included a reference which appeared to suggest that judges were free to interpret the law, at least when it gave no clear guidance, with the help of Islamic sources and authentic *fatwas*. He would welcome the delegation's comments on any interference, by reference to divine limits, in the judiciary's interpretation of the provisions of the Covenant, and hence the State party's obligation to fulfil its duties under article 2 of the Covenant.

43. **Mr. Amor** requested data on the number of times the Covenant had been invoked before domestic courts and the attitude judges had shown to the Covenant. He would welcome clarification of the place of the Covenant in the hierarchy of norms. Under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, States parties to an international instrument could not invoke the provisions of their internal law as justification for failure to perform a treaty.

44. He remained concerned at the discrimination against women in the State party. Wives appeared to have to obey a number of rules that were not reciprocal for their husbands. Could wives demand in their marriage contract that they be given freedom of movement and that their husbands would not take additional wives? He asked whether polygamy was prohibited in all circumstances and whether it was punished in practice. He requested statistics on polygamy in the State party. It would be useful to know whether the clause in the marriage contract indicating that half the assets belonged to the wife, mentioned in paragraph 697 of the periodic report, was regulated by law.

45. **Ms. Waterval** asked whether the State party's legislation contained a definition of "heavy and most serious crimes", as mentioned in paragraph 43 of the written replies, or whether there was a list of such crimes. She also wished to know whether there had been any cases in which courts had met in the absence of the defence lawyer, resulting in the verdict being declared null and void, as mentioned in paragraph 46 of the replies.

The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

46. **Ms. Hamed** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in accordance with article 9 of the Civil Code, the Covenant had the same status as domestic legislation. Judges could not contravene the provisions of the Covenant and efforts had been made to bring some aspects of domestic legislation into line with the Covenant. There was a need to provide judges and lawyers with more training on the Covenant in order to encourage them to invoke it in domestic courts. The data collection system did not permit the central gathering of data on court rulings, which made it difficult to compile the data the Committee had requested. As indicated in the written reply to question 1 of the list of issues, all the victims in the contaminated blood case would receive financial compensation, regardless of their gender and nationality.

47. **Mr. Asgharee** (Islamic Republic of Iran) added that, while the Constitution did not indicate the status of international instruments relative to domestic legislation, most jurists were of the opinion that international instruments took precedence over domestic legislation. There was, in general, a lack of awareness among judges about the provisions of the Covenant and other international human rights instruments.

48. **Ms. Ebrahimi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that several measures had been taken to encourage women to occupy high-level posts and increase their managerial skills, including a Government directive to that end. A number of Government departments were staffed exclusively by women, including the office in charge of advising the President on women's and family issues. There were several female politicians in high posts, including advisers to the President and female members of parliament. There were now four women in the Cabinet and many more women now stood for local and national elections than had previously been the case.

49. **Ms. Elaheyani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in her country, it was generally considered that women held a special position in society as wives, mothers and heads of households. The situation of women had significantly improved since 1993. Much emphasis had been placed on education, with many literacy campaigns focusing on girls and women. Some 60 per cent of university places were now filled by women and some 70 per cent of medical researchers were women.

50. Women also played a much more prominent role in social activities, working for NGOs for example. Many worked for NGOs that promoted women's and children's rights and were consulted by the country's highest decision-making authorities. Women were enjoying increasing success in sports in the domestic and international arenas. There were women's colleges, health centres and specialist hospitals.

51. **Mr. Tahmasebi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the 30 bills currently before parliament placed significant emphasis on human rights. Polygamy was not currently prohibited outright, but had been limited to a few special circumstances. Couples that did not register their marriage were punishable under the Islamic Penal Code. Steps were being taken to prevent domestic violence, including setting up specialist departments in welfare organizations, introducing targets, conducting training for emergency services staff on identifying and dealing with cases of domestic violence, and establishing shelters for women victims of domestic violence.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.