



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Seventy-eighth session**

Summary record of the 2069th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 25 February 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Kemal

Contents

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

Seventeenth and eighteenth periodic reports of Yemen

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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

Seventeenth and eighteenth periodic reports of Yemen (CERD/C/YEM/17-18; CERD/C/YEM/Q/17-18; HRI/CORE/1/Add.115)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Yemen took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Alban** (Yemen) said that her country had adopted democracy, founded on the equality of all its citizens, as a way of life. The Constitution ensured respect for the rights of all citizens regardless of their colour, social origin or gender, and enshrined in its provisions the same rights as those contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Her Government considered racial discrimination, which called into question the dignity of the human being, to be the worst form of human rights violation. Yemen was a homogeneous society that in no way practised discrimination. For two decades, it had worked to promote the development of human rights, meet the needs of its citizens and encourage their participation in political life. Thousands of civil society groups throughout the country were at liberty to engage in their activities.
3. The State party had opened the door to reform of domestic legislation in line with its commitments under the various international instruments, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which it was a party. Domestic legislation protected the lower strata of society and the Government endeavoured to provide education and health care for all. The Constitution granted all economic, social and cultural rights and permitted anyone to stand for national and local elections. All citizens were entitled to form or join political parties or organizations and, indeed, representatives of various civil society associations sat on local government bodies.
4. The State authorities viewed acts of discrimination on grounds of colour, social origin, religion or gender as heinous offences and punished them severely. A bill on the punishment of such offences in line with international law was under consideration and a series of human rights acts had been passed. A national commission had been established to harmonize domestic legislation with international law and the creation of a national human rights commission based on the Paris Principles was being considered. Another commission had the task of spreading awareness of human rights and including them as a subject in school curricula. A code of ethics had been prepared for members of the judiciary and several conferences on racial discrimination had been held.
5. The Ministry of Human Rights, aided by the United Nations Development Fund, was training regional and local court officials, police and local council employees as part of a broader effort to combat discrimination against women. Amendments to the Nationality Act allowed Yemeni women who married foreigners to retain their nationality.
6. The State party housed around 800,000 refugees, mostly from Somalia. Their freedom of movement and right to pursue any occupation without discrimination were guaranteed. Refugees who obeyed Yemeni laws were treated on an equal footing with Yemeni citizens and the National Committee on Refugee Affairs ensured that their rights were respected. In addition to the Ministry of Human Rights, refugees could also approach legal experts for help in submitting complaints or overcoming administrative problems. The enactment of legislation and adoption of measures in the areas of political, economic, social and cultural rights had markedly improved the human rights situation.
7. **Mr. Al-Hawri** (Yemen) said that his was a developing country with 23 million inhabitants and an annual per capita income of US\$ 2,000. It was endeavouring to establish

a population database with a view to identifying regional and economic needs more precisely and implementing appropriate development and social strategies to improve living conditions for all. It had limited means and faced considerable challenges, such as a high birth rate, political instability and security problems. Three quarters of the population lived in rural areas and 40 per cent below the poverty line. Unemployment among the labour force of 5 million was 13 per cent.

8. The collection of population data had boosted efforts to combat child labour and helped with planning the construction of schools and hospitals. The data had been used to set up a system of social protection for the most marginalized members of society and to provide education, drinking water and health care to the poor. The number of children attending school had risen to 70 per cent and the aim was to increase that figure to 92 per cent in the coming five years. A number of documents and plans, which would be forwarded to the Committee, set out the State party's goals for 2015 and included improving health care and education access for the poor, reducing unemployment and attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Many of those plans focused on the improvement of women's rights. Other programmes concentrated on job creation for young people, for instance through aid to small businesses. In 2009, a bank had been established to finance business plans proposed by persons without the means to launch them.

9. The State party had done all in its power, given its limited resources, to integrate refugees. The Government, in concert with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, distributed food aid to refugees with the aim of meeting basic nutrition needs, and efforts were being made to ensure that refugee children received adequate health care and schooling. Funds had also been set aside to refurbish run-down schools, and refugee camps were visited regularly to assess living conditions in them. Where possible, the authorities worked with refugees to encourage their repatriation.

10. **Mr. Abdullah** (Yemen) said that the rights of migrant workers were addressed in article 29 of the Constitution and article 5 of the Labour Code, under which all forms of discrimination against workers were prohibited. Yemen, however, was a net exporter of labour and foreigners working in Yemen tended to be experts hired to work in specialized areas. The State party had updated the Labour Code with the assistance of the International Labour Organization.

11. Although few reliable statistics were available, the State party estimated the number of marginalized people in its territory to be around 1.4 million. The Akhdam, although considered the same as other Yemenis, were admittedly among the poorest people in Yemen, and the Government not only provided services specifically targeted at improving their lot, but was considering the establishment of a Government agency to focus on their rights. It had encouraged them to form civil society associations in defence of their rights and, by 2010, around 50 had been established, many of them represented in an umbrella federation founded in 2008. Hospitals provided the Akhdam with all necessary health care and there were plans to employ them in the public administration. Many were already on local government councils. Around 47,000 households received social security benefits.

12. **Mr. Alaud** (Yemen) said that a special immigration department to help refugees had been set up in 2009 and the National Committee on Refugee Affairs had been asked to look at the specific issue of asylum-seekers. Refugee children could enrol in schools in the cities free of charge and special school facilities, funded by UNHCR, had been set up in refugee camps. Aid programmes for refugee children, including one to combat malnutrition, were also run in conjunction with UNHCR and health care in public hospitals was free for refugees. The Government needed more international assistance to create vocational training centres for refugees and had requested aid in setting up job creation programmes for them.

13. **Mr. Al-Mugahed** (Yemen) said that his Government viewed the Convention as an integral part of domestic legislation. A general clause in the Constitution stated that parliament must approve all international instruments to which Yemen was a party, thus providing for their subsequent inclusion in domestic legislation.

14. During the period 2008–2010, Yemen had enacted some 20 new legal instruments with a view to complying with its international obligations. They dealt, in particular, with social welfare, labour rights, consumer rights, diplomatic and consular affairs, the development of skills, prevention of HIV/AIDS and protection of persons living with HIV/AIDS, and amendments to the Civil Code, the Nationality Act and the Press Act. The Criminal Code was also currently being amended to ensure that it covered all human rights issues, including racial discrimination.

15. He emphasized that the reservations to the Convention had been entered by the House of Representatives and could be withdrawn only by a decision of the House. However, the Ministry of Legal Affairs had recommended to the Government that it should withdraw the reservations unless the treaty provision concerned was contrary to Islam.

16. With regard to the situation of refugees, he said that a Migration and Refugees Study Centre had recently been established at Sana'a University. A bill concerning refugees was also under consideration.

17. **Mr. Al-Khazan** (Yemen) said that one of the basic principles of the sharia, on which Yemeni society was based, was the equality of all human beings without discrimination. The Yemeni people subscribed to the moral values prescribed by their religion, which were reflected in the legal system and were consistent with human rights and the international treaties that Yemen had ratified. Preparatory and in-service training courses in human rights law were provided for all members of the judiciary. Training seminars had been held on international human rights law, the economic empowerment of women, action against child trafficking and other topics. The judiciary had published a code of conduct for judges.

18. The Ministry of Justice had established a Department for Women, Children and Human Rights. Legal aid was provided to the poor and, in particular, juveniles. Prisons were regularly inspected to ensure that prisoners' rights were respected.

19. **Mr. Qahtan** (Yemen) said that the Yemeni authorities based their decisions concerning the admission, residence and expulsion of non-nationals on the relevant domestic legislation. Yemen was a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol thereto. No action had been taken that breached the rights of foreign residents or refugees and no foreign resident had been forcibly expelled. The steps taken by the Minister of the Interior following the events of 11 September 2001 had been fully in line with the relevant legal provisions. Foreigners without a legal residence permit had been instructed either to regularize their situation or to leave the country. Nobody had been compelled to travel to a country against his or her will.

20. A large number of measures had been taken in recent years to promote human rights awareness, primarily among law enforcement personnel and the judiciary. A total of 30,504 police officers, including 530 women officers, had attended such courses. Three courses for trainers, each attended by 20 police officers, had been held in 2010 on action against gender violence. About 60 police officers had participated in a seminar on legislation relating to criminal justice in Yemen organized by the Ministry of Human Rights in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

21. The Ministry of the Interior had published a practical "Guidebook for the police". Police officers were required to carry a copy of the booklet with them while on duty. The Ministry also sought to ascertain the degree of public satisfaction with police performance

through questionnaires. It had expanded the range of its security services throughout the country and had taken steps, within the limits of available resources, to improve prison conditions. Prisoners were permitted to pursue studies, including at university level, in the public education system, and in some governorates women prisoners could attend special occupational training centres following their release. All prisons were subjected to regular unannounced inspections by representatives of the public prosecution service and the High Commission on Prisons.

22. **Mr. Taissir** (Yemen) said that the Ministry of Human Rights had submitted an amendment to the Criminal Code three months previously containing a definition of racial discrimination identical to that set out in the Convention. The amendment, which had been approved by the Cabinet, had now been submitted to parliament and would be adopted and become law within a month.

23. With regard to the establishment of a national human rights institution based on the Paris Principles, the Prime Minister had decided, following discussions with a representative of the European Union (EU), to set up a national committee representing competent agencies and civil society organizations to study a project for the establishment of such an institution. The committee was still engaged in consultations with the EU and would shortly submit its recommendations to the Prime Minister.

24. The Ministry of Human Rights had not received a single complaint from any citizen or legal entity concerning any form of racial discrimination. If the Ministry were to receive any such complaint, it would take the requisite action to ensure that those responsible were brought to justice.

25. With regard to Government action on behalf of internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially those displaced by the Sa'dah war, the President had already allocated some 20 billion Yemeni rials for the reconstruction of dwellings and other buildings that had been destroyed. The Minister of Human Rights, members of the national committee responsible for dealing with the problems of displaced persons and representatives of the United Nations Development Programme had visited IDP camps in a number of governorates to ascertain their basic needs. The Government had also cooperated with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Yemen Red Crescent Society and a number of civil society organizations in distributing aid as speedily as possible. A training programme had been developed with the High Council for Mothers and Children to provide care for children who had suffered psychological damage during the armed conflict. A hotline had also been set up for complaints from IDPs who required assistance.

26. Yemen had an outstanding record in the area of protection of religious freedom. For example, a number of Yemeni and Iranian Baha'is had been practising their religion in Yemen quite freely for at least 50 years. A problem had arisen the previous year on account of some misunderstandings, but it had been handled speedily and effectively with the assistance of the Ministry of Human Rights. There were only about 300 Yemeni Jews, who enjoyed the same constitutional and legal rights as their Muslim fellow citizens. A problem had recently arisen in the case of a Yemeni Jewish woman who wished to marry a Muslim man. The problem had again been solved through the intervention of the Minister of Human Rights. A committee had ascertained that the woman had been acting of her own free will and without coercion.

27. **Mr. Prosper** (Country Rapporteur) expressed appreciation of the wide range of information provided in the State party's report. The Committee was also pleased that a high-level delegation had decided to engage in the current dialogue notwithstanding the challenges that the Yemeni authorities were facing at home.

28. A rising tide of democratic change was sweeping through the Arab world, including Yemen. Peoples who had previously lacked the courage to voice their demands were now

being empowered, questioning their Governments and claiming universally recognized rights. Concessions had been made by the Yemeni authorities, but some of the rights enshrined in the Convention were still not fully enjoyed. The report stated that democracy and human rights had become a pattern of behaviour and a way of life in Yemen. Unfortunately, however, there had been reports of violence perpetrated against civilians by Government forces, violations of personal freedoms and cases of discrimination. He hoped that the security forces complied with the President's directive to protect the people and that the Yemeni people would be allowed to protest and to make demands of the Government peacefully and lawfully.

29. The Committee was concerned that when disturbances occurred in any country, immigrants and other non-mainstream groups tended to be targeted and become more vulnerable. It was unclear to the Committee who might be in such a position of vulnerability in Yemen. It would be helpful if the delegation could place the events in context.

30. Yemen was a country with a complex history. It had been divided, particularly during the cold war, and reunited in the 1990s. It had faced major economic challenges and had been confronted with extremism and terrorism.

31. He commended the State party for the legal and other initiatives described in the report. Yemen certainly did not lack the tools required to protect human rights and combat discrimination. The dialogue with the delegation should therefore focus on implementation and on the political will to address existing problems.

32. The report lacked some vital information regarding, for instance, the ethnic composition of Yemeni society. Although it stated that that society was homogenous, it was common knowledge that Somalis, Ethiopians, Indians, Jews and Indonesians lived in the country. He therefore wondered whether or not they were deemed to belong to Yemeni society. The report also stated that the inhabitants of Yemen varied widely in terms of their complexion, "displaying every hue but black or near-black". That description clearly omitted many refugees, especially Somalis or Ethiopians. People who were "non-Yemeni" thus seemed to be placed in a separate category. The delegation had mentioned that there were some 800,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Yemen. The Committee would be interested in hearing whether they were living in camps or in society and whether they faced discrimination from Yemeni citizens. Once asylum-seekers were granted asylum, could they apply for Yemeni nationality?

33. The delegation had mentioned initiatives on behalf of marginalized groups such as the Akhdam. The Committee was aware that they lived in substandard conditions but it was receiving conflicting information as to their origin. For instance, he had learned from Internet research that they had "African features". He wished to hear more about the group, their plight and action being taken on their behalf.

34. He was pleased to hear about the action plans on behalf of refugees because the Committee had received reports to the effect that the authorities had deported some asylum-seekers without undertaking the necessary security-verification measures.

35. He noted that the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions had issued an urgent appeal in connection with alleged indiscriminate bombing of IDP camps in 2009. He asked whether the people in the camps formed part of the country's homogeneous society or belonged to a different ethnic or racial group. Several other urgent appeals had been issued at around the same time, one from the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, one from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and one from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. He enquired about the alleged victims in each case.

36. With regard to the reservations to article 5 (c) and (d) (iv), (vi) and (vii) of the Convention, the Committee understood that responsibility for the withdrawal of a reservation lay with the Yemeni parliament, but it would appreciate more detailed information on the grounds for the reservations concerning political rights, the right to marriage and choice of spouse, the right to inherit, and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. In the latter case was the reservation applicable only to freedom of religion or also to freedom of thought and conscience?

37. It was clear from recent events that many people living in Yemen felt they were being denied certain rights and benefits. If members of the homogeneous society were dissatisfied, he wondered about the feelings of those who might be described as outsiders. The report claimed that the people were the holders and source of power. He hoped that in that capacity they would guide the Government towards a better and stronger Yemen.

38. **Mr. Avtonomov** commended the State party for the steps it had taken to improve the enjoyment of human rights, including its ratification of the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Given that the Bedouin nomads had a different lifestyle from that of the majority of the population, he asked whether they suffered any kind of discrimination in the State party. He requested additional information on their socio-economic situation, access to water and participation in government. He would also appreciate disaggregated data on the composition of the population, without which it was impossible to ascertain whether any groups were suffering racial discrimination.

39. He would welcome clarification whether, under article 25 of the Code of Civil Procedure, foreigners had a different status to Yemeni citizens if they were involved in court cases that were not linked to Islamic law. In answering that question, the delegation should also take into consideration foreigners who had married Yemeni citizens outside the State party and their children. The Committee would appreciate additional details on the status of refugees in the State party's legislation and in practice, particularly regarding any assistance they were given in becoming self-sufficient.

40. **Mr. Saidou** welcomed the progress the State party had made towards establishing a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. While the State party had ratified both the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, it appeared that structural discrimination against people of African descent continued to exist in Yemeni society. He requested additional information on the Akhdam community. It would be useful to know how Jewish people were treated under the criminal justice system, which applied sharia law. While the periodic report asserted the homogeneous nature of Yemeni society, he would appreciate more information on people living in poverty.

41. **Mr. Diaconu** encouraged the Government to expedite the process of revising its legislation in order to fully implement the provisions of article 4 of the Convention. He failed to understand why the State party had made a reservation to article 5 (c) of the Convention, as it surely did not wish to discriminate against its own citizens, with respect to their political rights, on the grounds of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. Likewise, while the State party might discriminate in the field of religion, that was doubtless due to a difference in treatment from the standpoint of religion, not from that of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. The State party should therefore reconsider its reservation to article 5 (d) (vii) on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

42. In the light of reports the Committee had received of acts of violence against members of the Jewish community, he asked what measures the State party was taking to strengthen protection of that group. The Committee would welcome additional information on any racial discrimination suffered by people of African descent. He requested clarification as to why Egyptian, Eritrean and Saudi Arabian nationals had apparently been

returned to their countries of origin without right of appeal. It would also be useful to have more details of the treatment of people arriving in the State party from Iraq and Sudan. In that regard, he asked whether the State party had backed the 2004 Tunis Declaration issued at the sixteenth session of the Arab Summit. He also wished to know what measures the Yemeni authorities were taking to protect the rights of refugee children in Yemen, particularly in order to protect them from harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and keeping girls out of school.

43. **Mr. de Gouttes** asked to what extent sharia law could be applied to non-citizens. He urged the State party to incorporate the definition of racial discrimination contained in article 4 of the Convention into domestic legislation. He would welcome additional details on efforts being made to re-establish the equality of women's rights, particularly their civil rights, and to improve the situation of the Akhdam minority, particularly their children's access to education. The Committee would appreciate further details of the situation of other minorities, including people of African descent, Jews, Baha'is and non-citizens. While welcoming the measures the State party had taken to provide assistance and protection for refugees, he asked when the State party would adopt specific provisions on the definition and protection of asylum-seekers and refugees.

44. **Mr. Peter** said he would appreciate the delegation's comments on reports that there was constant tension between the Government, which wanted to bring about change, and the State party's influential Islamic clerics who wished to block that process.

45. It would be useful to know whether the social safety net that had been created had been successful in alleviating the suffering of the very poor and marginalized sectors of society, including the Akhdam minority and people of African descent.

46. The Committee had received reports that the practice of female genital mutilation during the first 40 days of a girl's life was widespread in coastal areas of the State party. While the Government had banned that practice in official health centres, the authorities apparently remained silent when it was performed by traditional female practitioners in private settings. He would welcome confirmation of those reports and an update on any steps the Government was taking to protect girls from that practice. In addition, early marriage was reportedly common in the State party and there had been significant press coverage of the case of Nojoud Mohammed Ali, a 9-year-old girl whose father had married her off to a 30-year-old man. The Committee would welcome information on the status of the law banning early marriage, particularly after large numbers of women had demonstrated in favour of that law outside parliament in early 2010.

47. It was regrettable that the periodic report contained so little updated information on civil and political rights. On enjoyment of the right to leave and return to the country, he would appreciate confirmation that women needed their husband's or guardian's permission to obtain a passport. He also wished to know how many women currently held seats in parliament.

48. **Ms. Crickley** echoed the Country Rapporteur's concern at the lack of up-to-date information to facilitate the current discussion. It would be useful to receive additional information on women occupying middle-management posts within the State administration and, in particular, on women from groups that were often vulnerable to racial discrimination. The Committee would be interested to know what measures the State party had adopted to ensure that any initiatives undertaken to further women's rights did not inadvertently perpetuate discriminatory practices or ascribe blame to women for practices such as female genital mutilation. The Committee would also like to know how the impact of such initiatives was measured.

49. On the question of poverty reduction, the Committee wished to know the steps the State party had taken to target minority groups such as refugees or foreign nationals who often fell outside the scope of poverty-reduction initiatives.

50. Conscious of the cultural and racial diversity of Yemen's population, the Committee would like to know what steps the Government had taken to address and raise awareness about racial discrimination within the education system, the public administration and the judiciary. The Government must fully acknowledge the racial plurality of its population if it was to adopt the measures necessary to root out racial discrimination.

51. **Ms. Alban** (Yemen), responding to questions raised about the current situation in Yemen, said that the events there had been triggered by those that had taken place in Tunisia. The international community was in fact likely to witness similar events throughout the Arab region. The current pace of change was most probably a positive sign and in Yemen it had sparked countrywide demonstrations. Previously, her Government had adopted measures provided for under Yemeni law in an attempt to meet the demands of people wishing to block constitutional amendments or to address rising poverty levels. However, while Yemen could avail itself of many effective laws, they were seldom implemented. Consequently, the Government had agreed to increase the salaries of civil servants, to postpone parliamentary elections and to start keeping a record of all persons who were of an age to vote.

52. Previously, the Government had endeavoured to open channels of communication between opposing political parties and civil society. However, the initiative had been hampered by conflicts of interest and the diverse range of demands intrinsic to a wide range of political opinion. In a change of tactics, the Government had urged all political parties to participate in a televised debate on the problems and challenges facing the country.

53. In response to the ample media coverage of the question of succession, it had been confirmed during a meeting with the national parliament that the President of the Republic had no intention of passing on the presidency to a member of his family.

54. While the Government was committed to ensuring respect for political freedom, it would not stand back and let the State descend into chaos. The Ministry of Human Rights had a duty to protect the rights of the Yemeni people and would view any attack on their liberties as an offence punishable by law. The Government operated on the principle of transparency and did not advocate the use of force against people engaged in peaceful demonstrations to assert legitimate rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution.

55. Women played a significant role in the life of the country, occupying positions such as adviser to the President, professors and judges. Conscious of the fact that women were underrepresented in Government, an initiative had been undertaken to establish a quota for women whereby 44 parliamentary seats would be automatically reserved for women in order to ensure equal representation.

56. The practice of female genital mutilation had been imported from African countries and was practised by only a small number of people in the south of the country. The Government's initiative to combat the practice was led by two State departments in conjunction with civil society and the national committee for women.

57. **Mr. Al-Hawri**, responding to questions on poverty reduction, said that his Government had developed a poverty-reduction strategy to be implemented during the period 2003–2005, which had paved the way for the development plan for 2015. The plan comprised an accelerated programme to mitigate poverty for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Additional mechanisms aimed at alleviating poverty included a social fund for impoverished rural areas, a small-loans scheme and a local council fund. However, the scarcity of resources had severely limited the scope of those mechanisms. In an effort to

curb unemployment, the Government had taken steps to secure donor resources and predicted lower poverty rates over the next three years as the country approached the Millennium Development Goals.

58. **Mr. Al-Mugahed** (Yemen), responding to questions on the applicability of Muslim law to foreigners and non-Muslims, said that there were no separate laws for foreigners or non-Muslims as such a distinction would give rise to legislative inconsistencies. While in most normal situations foreigners or non-Muslims were subject to the same laws as Yemenis, there were exceptions that his delegation could expound at a later date.

59. **Mr. Al-Adoofi** (Yemen), responding to questions on Yemen's political challenges, said that the country was undeniably going through a period of political upheaval; however, foreign media had a tendency to present an exaggerated version of events.

60. The EU had recently commended Yemen for the fair and democratic nature of its elections, which had been attended by international observers since 1993. Furthermore, the Government had taken steps to foster a deeper understanding of the political, economic and security-related problems Yemen faced as a country.

61. Since 1991, Yemen had operated an open-door policy in receiving Somali refugees and had quickly gained a reputation as a transit country. However, the fact that Yemen was the only host country in the region had left it with a number of problems. In the light of that fact, the Government had urged the international community to shoulder its responsibility in bringing peace to Somalia. Refugee camps and arrival centres had been set up in conjunction with UNHCR in an attempt to deal with the influx of refugees. The majority of Somali refugees travelled by boat, often at great personal risk, and were placed in camps on arrival. Once settled, they received support in order to facilitate their integration into camp life or into the life of the local community.

62. **Ms. Alban** (Yemen), also referring to the issue of refugees, said that while the Ministry of Human Rights normally enjoyed a close working relationship with UNHCR, the latter seemed to have the impression that Yemen received only Somali refugees when it also accepted refugees of Ethiopian, Iraqi and Palestinian origin. UNHCR's non-recognition of Ethiopian refugees had become a serious bone of contention for both the refugees and the Ministry. The Government noted with regret that any appeal transmitted to UNHCR on the subject of the Ethiopian refugees had fallen on deaf ears, as UNHCR had no mandate to intervene or issue them with the necessary documentation. Consequently, the refugees found themselves in a political no-man's-land as neither UNHCR nor the State was prepared to accept responsibility for their welfare.

63. The situation of Iraqi refugees was similar in that they too fell outside the scope of UNHCR's mandate and therefore did not qualify for either refugee status or the attendant assistance offered in such cases. Her Government urged the Committee to assist it in breaking the political impasse that would deny those refugees a nationality and access to education and other public services.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.