



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

Distr.
GENERAL

CERD/C/SR.1794
1 March 2007

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Seventieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1794th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Thursday, 22 February 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. YUTZIS (Vice-Chairperson)

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY
STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Tenth to thirteenth periodic reports of Israel

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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 (agenda item 5) (continued)

Tenth to thirteenth periodic reports of Israel (CERD/C/471/Add.2)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Israel took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. LEVANON (Israel), introducing his country's tenth to thirteenth periodic reports (CERD/C/471/Add.2), said that Israel's Declaration of Independence established the legal and social framework of the home of the Jewish people. It affirmed that Israeli society was democratic, open, pluralistic and free of any discrimination on the grounds of colour, religion, gender or belief or any other ground. Those values endured, despite the challenges the country faced in its ongoing struggle against terrorism, wars and hostilities. Israel had chosen to open itself to international scrutiny by interacting with United Nations human rights treaty bodies, other United Nations mechanisms and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Israel was fully committed to respecting its obligations under the Convention, and recognized that it, and every other democratic and accountable member of the international community, should impose restraints on its own actions in conformity with its responsibilities under international law.

3. In order to appreciate Israel's efforts to eliminate racial discrimination, it was necessary to understand the pressing security, political and social situation which was unique among democratic countries. Since 2000, Israel had suffered ongoing violence and armed hostilities in the West Bank and Gaza; a terrorist organization had been elected to lead the Palestinian Authority; in 2005, Israel had completely disengaged in military and civilian terms from the Gaza Strip; in 2006, Hezbollah and Hamas had kidnapped three Israeli servicemen, who were still missing, triggering a war with Lebanon; and against the background of a global resurgence of anti-Semitism, the President of Iran had publicly denied the Holocaust and called for Israel's annihilation. Resources that should be spent on implementing the Convention therefore often had to be used for security purposes.

4. His delegation appeared before the Committee with an open mind and willing to engage in substantive dialogue. He trusted that the somewhat confrontational and charged past interaction with the Committee would not be repeated, and that Committee members would take account of the unique challenges Israel faced.

5. Mr. LEVERTOV (Israel) said that Israel was a solid and dynamic democracy with free, independent national and international media, a diverse, active civil society and a vigorous, vocal academic community. NGOs participated in public debate and promoted awareness and sensitivity to human rights issues through education and sponsoring legislative proposals. His Government greatly appreciated those efforts.

6. Some 2,300 individuals and organizations filed petitions before the High Court of Justice every year, alleging violations of their rights under the Convention. All people, regardless of

citizenship, residency or status, had the right to address the Court, which had received worldwide recognition for its role in promoting human rights. Many Court decisions had upheld the principle of equality for all Israeli citizens, such as a 2007 ruling that the inclusion of service in the Israeli Defence Forces in the admission criteria of a community association constituted discrimination on the grounds of religion. In a 2006 ruling, the Court had quashed a government decision to establish national priority areas for education, holding that the decision had been discriminatory on the grounds of race and national origin. To establish such areas, the Knesset would have to enact new legislation. While another 2006 Court ruling had supported the dismissal of a government employee, the Court had stated that the Government should increase the representation of Israeli Arabs in the civil service.

7. Israeli courts had also tried several soccer fans for making remarks constituting incitement to racism during matches. In July 2005, a legislative amendment had introduced specific prohibition of racist utterances at soccer matches. The High Court of Justice also ensured that all branches of government and the private sector operated in accordance with the law. Previous Court decisions had established and protected the right to freedom of speech, the right to strike, the right of association and the right to full equality.

8. Since 1998, the Knesset had taken several steps to promote tolerance and to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. In 2007, it had approved the appointment of the first Muslim Arab Israeli Minister. In 2000, legislative amendments had introduced affirmative action to ensure appropriate representation of the Arab sector in the civil service and on the boards of directors of government corporations. In May 2002, the Knesset had criminalized the publication of incitement to acts of violence or terrorism, including praise, support or encouragement of any such acts. In 2004, it had introduced legislation on hate offences in aggravating circumstances, which were offences motivated by racism or hostility towards the public on the grounds of religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or foreign worker status. Several perpetrators of such offences had been prosecuted in 2006. Further amendments to telecommunications and media laws had prohibited licensed cable broadcasters and concession-holders from transmitting any material containing incitement to racism. Legislation enacted in 2000 had banned discrimination in the private sector, stipulating that any person supplying a product or service to the public or managing a public place could not discriminate on grounds including race, religion, nationality, origin, gender and sexual orientation. That included action taken in supplying a product or service, or allowing entrance to a public place.

9. Amendments to employment law had ensured that migrant workers enjoyed proper working conditions and employment rights. The withdrawal of passports had been criminalized. Comprehensive legislation prohibiting trafficking in persons and related crimes had entered into force in October 2006. It introduced strict sentences for the crimes of trafficking and slavery, and provided for compensation for the victims of such crimes. Immigration officers received specific training to raise their awareness of the plight of migrant workers, and police officers were trained in identifying victims of trafficking. Law enforcement officials received general human rights education on initial training courses and during their careers, which facilitated better understanding of the diverse communities living in Israel and equal enforcement of the law. Police training programmes on civil rights had been developed in coordination with an NGO working in that field.

10. In 2003, a Knesset forum for Jewish-Arab relations had been established to promote coexistence at all levels of society and to ensure the fair allocation of State resources to all sectors of the population. The forum was composed of over 30 Knesset members from various political parties and ethnic backgrounds.

11. In 2006, equal opportunities legislation had been amended, providing for the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. An advisory committee would be made up of relevant ministerial representatives, organizations working to promote equal employment rights, trade unions and employers' organizations and other experts in the field. The Commission was responsible for raising public awareness, handling allegations of violations of the equal employment legislation and could, with court approval, intervene in legal proceedings and issue directives to employers to ensure compliance with the law.

12. In order to reduce the gap between the living standards and the level of participation in national affairs of the Jewish and Arab population, the Multi-Year Development Plan for the Arab Israeli Sector had been completed in 2004. The Plan provided some NIS 4 billion (almost US\$ 1 billion) in financial support and assistance to the Arab population in order to promote short-term economic growth and long-term development in education, housing and employment. During the five years it had been implemented, 80 per cent of the Plan's budget had been preserved despite significant reductions in the State budget owing to recession and the effects of the armed conflict and threats to Israel's security. In total, 87 per cent of the funds allocated to the Plan had been spent on building roads, schools and sewage facilities.

13. In 2005, his Government had adopted a National Strategic Plan for the Development of the Negev, an area in southern Israel where most of the Bedouin population lived. The Plan would extend from 2006 to 2015 and some NIS 17 billion would be allocated to it, directly or indirectly. The Plan aimed to develop the area by improving the infrastructure and the education system. It also sought to increase employment in the Negev by encouraging businesses in the Bedouin community, with the objective of adding approximately 20,000 employees in 10 years. Bedouin businesses could receive funding and employee training under the Plan, which would also subsidize women's work and develop the infrastructure of commercial areas. The Government therefore hoped to reduce the income gap between Negev residents and other Israeli residents.

14. Mr. LEVANON (Israel) said that in January 2007 the Ministerial Committee on the Non-Jewish Sector had established an authority for the economic development of the Arab sector. The aim of the authority was to maximize the economic potential of the Arab, Druze and Circassian sectors, by taking a variety of financial measures to promote equality and the full integration of those sectors into the national economy. The authority would encourage and promote investment in the minority sector, enhance accessibility to government assistance, encourage joint Arab-Jewish business activity, and encourage initiatives by local municipalities.

15. Israel was committed to implementing affirmative action programmes to bridge gaps. In May 2006, the Attorney-General had issued a directive mandating a comprehensive review of legislative measures to ensure appropriate representation of all groups in the civil service and public corporations. The Government had made notable strides during the reporting period to improve cultural respect and understanding among young people of all ethnicities through the adaptation of school curricula, which emphasized equal civil rights for all. Legislation

prohibiting all forms of racial discrimination had been amended to include provisions to ensure that the Israeli education system recognized the language, history, heritage and unique tradition of the Arab and other population groups in Israel, and to recognize the equal rights of all Israeli citizens. Educational programmes on human rights issues, such as tolerance, equality and social justice, were conducted routinely across the country. Israel had instituted special events, such as the annual human rights day and the day of remembrance of the assassination of Itzhak Rabin, to promote the discussion of human rights, democracy and tolerance. A curriculum had been developed in Arabic and Hebrew, and was updated regularly.

16. Israel had founded a number of continuing projects to eliminate discrimination and promote tolerance and coexistence. Many programmes for mutual understanding had been launched, including a forum of Jewish and Arab school principals, who met regularly to exchange ideas. An Arab-Jewish student parliament with the participation of hundreds of young people met regularly to discuss issues of coexistence. An exchange programme had been developed for Arab and Jewish teachers of mathematics and English, enabling them to teach in each other's schools and thus share experience and knowledge. Efforts were also being made to educate all students in citizenship, civic duty and democracy. Tolerance must connect all beliefs and be used to mediate between all peoples.

17. Mr. KJAERUM, Country Rapporteur, drew attention to the Committee's list of issues, contained in a document without a symbol. The Committee would have preferred to receive written replies to the issues raised, but would of course appreciate oral replies. He regretted that the State party report did not contain any information on the implementation of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories - the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights - as previously requested by the Committee. Israel had an obligation to implement the Convention in relation to all persons under its jurisdiction.

18. He acknowledged Israel's difficult situation in the light of the armed attacks that were taking place on Israeli territory, and the serious security concerns and human rights issues resulting from terrorism. That notwithstanding, measures taken to combat terrorism and protect the rights of the people to security and integrity must not undermine other aspects of human rights protection.

19. Israel had taken many positive steps to implement the Convention since the consideration of its previous periodic report, including the adoption of the Act relating to the Prohibition of Discrimination in Products, Services and Entry into Places of Entertainment and Public Places. He would appreciate further information on the implementation of the Act, and asked whether any cases had been brought before the courts. He expressed concern about provisions of criminal procedure legislation that allowed lengthy periods of incommunicado detention and prolonged periods without access to a lawyer or being brought before a judge. He asked for further information on the implementation of that legislation. Provisions on the treatment of detainees suspected of security offences should be defined narrowly in order to avoid potentially discriminatory interpretations. He welcomed measures to ensure a more balanced representation of all minorities in the civil service. He wondered whether government bodies had provided any information on obstacles to the implementation of those measures. He wished to know what steps were being taken to address the underrepresentation of minority women in the civil service. The Committee would appreciate further information concerning the practical implications of the Supreme Court decision on the policy on targeted killings.

20. In order to meet the challenge of creating social cohesion in a multicultural society, robust constitutions and laws were required, with a universalist approach to the promotion and protection of human rights. Social cohesion was difficult to achieve where discrimination prevailed in law or practice. Israel was defined as a democratic and Jewish State, with a set of Jewish values and a set of democratic values. Those two sets of values were not mutually exclusive, and could be reconciled. If the definition of the State as Jewish resulted in any differences, in law or practice, between the enjoyment of human rights of non-Jewish persons and Jewish persons under Israel's jurisdiction, questions would be raised under the Convention. He asked how the Government ensured that the application of its fundamental laws was compatible with the principle of non-discrimination set forth in article 1 of the Convention. Were there any initiatives to adopt a general provision on equality prohibiting discrimination as outlined in that article? He would welcome more information on how the Government foresaw the development of the national identity of the people residing in Israel, while respecting the rights of all citizens to equal treatment regardless of race or ethnicity. He wished to know how the Government planned to achieve greater social cohesion, and requested further information on the issues discussed at the 2003 forum on Jewish-Arab cohabitation.

21. He had been informed that the judiciary was making efforts to ensure a fair balance between security laws and respect for the right to freedom of expression. Such a balance was particularly significant in the context of efforts to fight terrorism while respecting human rights standards. In many cases of reportedly racist statements, the Israeli Attorney-General had adopted a restrained policy on prosecution, in particular of politicians and other public figures, giving warnings but not initiating investigations. Politicians and public figures could play a key role in either exacerbating division, or fostering a society where mutual understanding and respect prevailed. The Committee was concerned that a lack of firm action by the State party in response to racist statements by politicians could be seen as acceptance of such statements and a basis for tension between different ethnic and other groups in society.

22. He drew the delegation's attention to the Committee's General Recommendation XXXI, which provided detailed recommendations on how to assess whether and to what extent racial discrimination occurred in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system. He requested information on how the application, in the occupied territories, of separate sets of rules to Palestinians and Israelis who had committed criminal offences was consistent with the principle of non-discrimination. He would welcome comments on the reports of widespread attacks on and destruction of Palestinian property by Israeli settlers that were rarely investigated or prosecuted. He asked what measures were being taken to prevent and redress such crimes.

23. The ruling of the Supreme Court in the Ka'adan case constituted important recognition of the principle of equality regarding land rights. He would be interested to receive further information about the source of the ruling, in particular the basis of the duty of the Israel Land Administration not to discriminate, since there was no specific legislation banning discrimination in access to land or housing. Although that ruling was limited to the specific circumstances of the case, it had resulted in new admission criteria by the Israel Land Administration and the Jewish Agency relevant to anyone wishing to settle in small communal settlements. He asked

what measures had been taken to implement the decision, and what criteria could legally be used to refuse an application for settlement in a Jewish area or village. He requested further information on the mandate, status and responsibilities of the Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Agency, the Israel Land Administration and the World Zionist Movement, and whether non-discrimination provisions were binding on those bodies. He also asked for information about the budget of those bodies, and how it was spent.

24. Although since 1948 a large number of Jewish towns and villages had been established, no new Arab towns had been created. Arabs owned 3 per cent of the land in Israel, while 93 per cent was owned by the State. He asked how State land was allocated to Jewish and Arab citizens, and what proportion of land was administered by the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency. He expressed concern about the continuing establishment of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that were for Jewish persons only, and the impact of policies relating to the maintenance of those settlements on the enjoyment of human rights by Palestinians. He drew particular attention to the situation in Hebron, where segregation and severe restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement had a negative impact on human rights, including the rights to work, education and health.

25. Turning to the issue of housing, he said that there was a severe shortage of housing for the Arab population, and that many houses and structures were built without a permit. He asked the delegation to comment on the potential barriers to obtaining a building permit, such as lack of available land, and zoning, planning and building regulations. Lack of building permits created a number of problems, including the risk of house demolition and the lack of municipal services and infrastructure in areas that were not built in accordance with zoning plans. He expressed concern about reports that Arab Israelis and Palestinians in Israel were disproportionately affected by house demolitions. He asked what were the criteria for recognizing villages, and how they were applied throughout the country. The Committee had been informed that such problems most acutely affected the Bedouins living in unrecognized villages in the Negev-Naqab, where residents did not receive any services such as water, electricity and sanitation, despite the fact that they paid taxes. He asked what the livelihood options and growth possibilities were in the planned townships mentioned in paragraph 382 of the State party report.

26. Although restrictions on the right to freedom of movement could be justified on the basis of national security, the many and severe restrictions on movement, particularly for Palestinians in the occupied territories, must be critically examined for their compliance with requirements of proportionality and necessity. The construction of the wall, largely inside the West Bank, and the establishment of a closed area between the Green Line and the wall had resulted in serious restrictions on freedom of movement for the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories, including the institution of a complex permit system that only applied to Palestinians and not Israelis. The Committee would welcome the delegation's comments on that discrimination, its legal basis and steps taken to ensure that security measures were implemented in a non-discriminatory manner. He asked whether there had been a comprehensive study of the impact of the wall on Palestinian lives. He wished to know what measures had been taken to implement the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that held that the wall constituted a violation of international law.

27. Restrictions on movement in the West Bank, including staffed checkpoints, roadblocks and patrols, resulted in a de facto prohibition of travel for Palestinian drivers. In other areas, passage was subject to a permit regime that, according to reports, was not transparent and did not guarantee passage for permit-holders. Restrictions were based on oral orders, rather than written policies or directives, and traffic laws were strictly enforced in relation to Palestinian vehicles, while the police often disregarded offences by Israeli vehicles. He expressed concern about the recent Order on Movement and Travel that prohibited Palestinians who did not hold a permit to enter Israel or were not a close relative of the driver from travelling in Israeli vehicles in the West Bank.

28. All those restrictions were considered to be the primary cause of poverty and economic depression in the West Bank. He requested further information and comments on the legal basis for such restrictions and how they were reconciled with the principle of non-discrimination. He asked what was being done to eliminate the negative social and economic effects of the restrictions.

29. He requested further information on the debate in the Knesset about bringing the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law - considered by a majority within the Supreme Court as discriminatory against Arabs and in violation of the right to family life - in line with human rights standards.

30. He asked the delegation to give examples of how the funds from Israel's Multi-Year Development Plan for the Arab Israeli Sector had been used in specific projects for Arab towns. He expressed concern about Israel's segregated educational system: Palestinian students received lower-quality education, thus attaining lower levels of literacy and academic achievement. He invited the delegation to describe measures taken to combat racial discrimination against Arab women in areas such as work, health care, education and access to justice. He asked if Israel had planned to strengthen its legal mechanisms for redress of human rights violations, for instance by making the declaration under article 14 of the Convention.

31. Mr. SICILIANOS invited the delegation to comment on reports received by the Committee that migrant workers in Israel were discriminated against in a number of respects. First, migrant workers suffered discrimination in their working conditions, and the Israeli Government failed to enforce the law against employers violating their rights. For instance, it was common practice for employers, especially in the agricultural sector, to confiscate the passports of migrant workers. Moreover, legislation adopted in 2002 enshrined in law the discrimination against foreign nationals in matters relating to detention. In particular, an amendment to the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law had created two separate systems of criminal procedure - one for the detention of foreign nationals suspected of being illegal residents, and another for Israeli citizens suspected of other criminal actions.

32. Furthermore, it was possible for individuals to be deported from Israel before their case had even been brought before the tribunal, since by law individuals could be deported 72 hours after their arrest. For foreign nationals suspected of illegal sojourn, detention was the rule and bail the exception, unlike for other detainees, for whom alternatives to detention always had to be considered.

33. He would welcome further information on the application of the law to combat trafficking of workers and certain forms of slavery. He would also like to know how effective had been the measures to reduce the severe socio-economic inequality that existed between the Jewish and Arab populations.

34. Mr. EWOMSAN raised the question whether the building of a wall and settlements constituted sound bases on which to forge peace. He would like to know what measures had been taken to improve the living conditions, health status, educational level and employment of the Falasha, the African population of Ethiopian origin living in Israel.

35. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES said that since the delegation had not answered the questions on the list of issues, he endorsed the fundamental questions asked by the Country Rapporteur. In particular, the report did not address the issue of the occupied territories, which made it difficult for the Committee to pass judgement on Israel's implementation of the Convention.

36. He commended the Government of Israel for some surprisingly liberal judicial decisions, such as the one mentioned in paragraph 214 of the report in favour of Azmi Bshara, chairman of the Arab political party Ballad, who had spoken against the right of the Jewish people to the State of Israel.

37. In connection with the Israeli representative's reference to the "confrontational and charged" past relationship between his country and the Committee, he noted that the consideration of Israel's 1997 periodic report had taken place after General Assembly resolution 3379 (XXX) equating Zionism with racism had been revoked in 1991. He asked why the Israeli representative had referred to comments by Iranian President Ahmadinejad's negation of the holocaust. How did that apply to the Committee?

38. Mr. AVTONOMOV said that, according to information available to the Committee, the Jewish and Arab populations had different access to water, which particularly affected Arabs living in the West Bank and on the territory of Israel proper. He drew the delegation's attention to the general comment No. 15 on the right to water of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which included the issue of discrimination and was therefore relevant to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

39. He would like the delegation to clarify what percentage of Israeli citizens were non-Jews, and of those how many were civil service employees. Also, could the delegation explain why citizens of Arab origin rarely became ministers?

40. Mr. AMIR asked if he was right in thinking that the term "Palestine" did not exist in Israel's declaration of independence as it had been replaced with "Erez Yisrael" (the land of Israel that God had promised the Jews).

41. He wondered whether Israel could take unilateral measures to advance the peace process, and why the Oslo Accords had failed despite having had support from the United States. Finally, he asked the delegation to confirm that it was forbidden for Arab women in Palestine to marry Arab Israelis.

42. Mr. VALENCIA RODRÍGUEZ commended the State party for its efforts to improve the living conditions of Bedouin communities, prohibit racism on the Internet, provide human rights training for law enforcement officials, and ensure the participation of Arab minority representatives in government.

43. Since the report said nothing about the implementation of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories, he would welcome additional information on steps taken to that end, especially with regard to articles 4, 5 and 6. Implementation throughout the State party's territory was fundamental to fulfilling the obligations flowing from the Convention.

44. Mr. TANG Chengyuan asked whether Arabs whose land had been confiscated or nationalized for development purposes were eligible for compensation, and whether the expropriated land was being used for the benefit of both Arab and non-Arab citizens.

45. The fact that officials found guilty of offences relating to racism were reportedly not subject to severe punishment was not conducive to preventing such conduct. Moreover, it emerged from paragraph 157 of the report that only 2 of the 17 persons indicted for such offences had been sentenced, although some of the proceedings had been instituted as early as 2001. Measures should be taken to address the delay in prosecuting perpetrators of racist offences.

46. Mr. PILLAI expressed concern over the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The preferential treatment accorded to persons of Jewish nationality, including in the context of the implementation of the Law of Return, was another cause for concern, since such a practice might result in de facto discrimination against non-Jews.

47. He asked to what extent the large-scale immigration of Jews from countries such as his own contributed to Israel's ethnic plurality. He would welcome information on their numbers and enquired whether they enjoyed the same rights as other Israeli citizens.

48. Mr. THORNBERRY said that he had been somewhat surprised to note that entire Bedouin villages were being termed "illegal", and wished to know whether the phenomenon of "illegal" settlement was unique to that population group. Recalling that, in international law, traditional occupation of land generated international rights even if those rights were not recognized in the local legal system, he enquired to what extent Bedouin customary concepts of land ownership were recognized in Israeli law. In that connection, he expressed concern about the adversarial procedure applied to land disputes, which included counterclaims, and the growing role of the Israel Land Administration in enforcing disputed rights. He asked whether the planning of Bedouin towns and villages was conducted in consultation with the affected communities.

49. The delegation should describe the way in which history was taught in the State party; provide specific information on relevant curricula; and indicate to what extent the teaching of history contributed to reconciliation and healing. He enquired whether the State party intended to extend the applicability of international instruments, including the Convention, to the occupied Palestinian territories.

50. Mr. KEMAL observed that the implementation of the Convention with regard to all persons under State party jurisdiction, including residents of the occupied territories, would both benefit the population concerned and promote peace in the region and, consequently, in the world.

51. He would be interested to learn how many persons had sought refuge in the State party under the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and whether any Arabs had availed themselves of the provisions of that instrument.

52. Persons who had performed military service reportedly enjoyed certain privileges, including financial privileges, when enrolling in higher education. He enquired whether exemption from military service automatically barred Arabs from eligibility for such privileges and, if so, whether they had the possibility of performing alternative service to qualify for education benefits or discounts in the purchase of property available to former soldiers.

53. Ms. JANUARY-BARDILL said that repeated references to “the Arab sector”, “the Bedouin sector”, and Arab and Jewish schools in the report stood in contrast to the State party’s assertion in paragraph 136 that there was no segregation of any kind. The report further described affirmative action measures, which suggested that some form of equality requiring redress did indeed exist; and the Law of Return implicitly segregated Jewish from non-Jewish citizens. It was unclear how the structural organization of a society in sectors with very specific legal frameworks promoted the principles of non-discrimination and equality. She was not convinced that there was no segregation and it would be useful if the delegation could explain how the State party defined that concept.

54. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that he had been somewhat surprised to learn of the State party’s commitment to cooperate with the United Nations, given that Israel had rejected most United Nations resolutions concerning the occupied Palestinian territories. He requested the delegation to provide data on the number of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons without trial. He also enquired whether the relocation of Bedouin communities took place with their consent, and whether they received compensation for relinquished property.

55. Mr. CALI TZAY said that he would be interested to learn how the State party defined the concept of intercultural relations. The delegation should provide information on measures taken to promote such relations and explain why the inter-cultural encounters mentioned in paragraph 167 of the report appeared to be available to law enforcement officials only, and not the general public.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.