



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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## Human Rights Committee

### Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Slovakia\*

1. The Committee considered the fifth periodic report of Slovakia<sup>1</sup> at its 4266th and 4267th meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 4 and 5 March 2026. At its 4283rd meeting, held on 17 March, it adopted the present concluding observations.

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee is grateful to the State Party for having accepted the simplified reporting procedure and for submitting its fifth periodic report in response to the list of issues prior to reporting prepared under that procedure.<sup>3</sup> It expresses its appreciation for the opportunity to renew its constructive dialogue with the State Party's delegation on the measures taken during the reporting period to implement the provisions of the Covenant. The Committee thanks the State Party for the oral responses provided by the delegation and for the supplementary information provided to it in writing.

#### B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the following legislative and policy measures taken by the State Party:

(a) Adoption of Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on victims of crime, on 12 October 2017, as subsequently amended on 1 July 2021, strengthening victims' rights, compensation for them and the establishment of intervention centres for victims of domestic violence;

(b) Adoption of the national programme for combating trafficking in persons for the period 2024–2028 and its action plan, approved on 18 October 2023;

(c) Adoption, on 7 April 2021, of the strategy for equality, inclusion and Roma participation by 2030 and the accompanying action plans;

(d) Adoption, on 28 April 2021, of the equality strategy and the action plan for equality between women and men and equal opportunities for the period 2021–2027;

(e) Adoption, on 12 January 2022, of the action plan for the prevention and elimination of violence against women for the period 2022–2027;

4. The Committee also welcomes the ratification by the State Party of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, on 19 September 2023.

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its 145th session (2–19 March 2026).

<sup>1</sup> [CCPR/C/SVK/5](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [CCPR/C/SR.4266](#) and [CCPR/C/SR.4267](#).

<sup>3</sup> [CCPR/C/SVK/QPR/5](#).



## C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

### Constitutional and legal framework within which the Covenant is implemented

5. The Committee notes with concern the constitutional amendments introduced by Constitutional Law No. 255/2025 Coll., adopted on 26 September 2025, which, in new article 7 (6) and (7), affirms that the State Party retains sovereignty in matters relating to “national identity consisting mainly of basic cultural and ethical issues” and that the Constitution is not to be interpreted as permitting the transfer of the exercise of powers in such matters. The Committee is deeply concerned that the concept of “national identity”, if interpreted without sufficient clarification, can create serious uncertainty regarding the relationship between the Covenant and domestic law and potentially affect legal certainty and the effective protection of Covenant rights. It is concerned that the notion of “national identity” can contribute to exclusionary attitudes and increase the risk of discrimination and intolerance (art. 2).

**6. The State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure that the amendments introducing article 7 (6) and (7) in the Constitution are interpreted and applied in full conformity with its obligations under the Covenant.**

7. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State Party to promote the participation of civil society in the implementation of the Covenant and the dissemination of the Committee’s concluding observations and related information. The Committee is nevertheless concerned about the limited opportunities for local civil society organizations to directly engage in the preparation of the State Party’s report under the Covenant and in the interactive dialogue with the Committee. In addition, the Committee notes with concern that the State Party does not intend to provide compensation to Mr. Jandiev<sup>4</sup> and has therefore not given full effect to the Committee’s Views adopted under the Optional Protocol (art. 2).

**8. The State Party should:**

(a) **Ensure the full implementation of concluding observations and Views adopted by the Committee and guarantee the right of victims to an effective remedy in accordance with article 2 (2) and (3) of the Covenant;**

(b) **Intensify its efforts to raise awareness about the Covenant and the first Optional Protocol thereto, including by widely disseminating the Committee’s concluding observations and recommendations, by providing systematic training to government officials, judges, prosecutors and lawyers on the Covenant and by encouraging national courts and administrative bodies to take account of the Committee’s jurisprudence and recommendations;**

(c) **Strengthen measures to ensure the effective, meaningful and informed participation of civil society organizations in the implementation of the Covenant, the present concluding observations and all initiatives concerning them, including their dissemination.**

### National human rights institution

9. The Committee notes that the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights was accredited with B status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2014. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding increases in the Centre’s funding and staffing, the Committee remains concerned about its limited mandate, its members’ independence and the absence of clear guarantees of functional immunity for its members (art. 2).

**10. Recalling its previous recommendations, the Committee reiterates that the State Party should further strengthen its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, in order to ensure that the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights fully complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the**

<sup>4</sup> *Jandiev v. Slovakia* (CCPR/C/141/D/3193/2018).

**Paris Principles) and is able to carry out its mandate effectively and independently. In particular, it should ensure adequate and stable financial and human resources, transparent, participatory and independent procedures for the selection and appointment of board members and clear and explicit legal guarantees of functional immunity for its members.**

#### **Non-discrimination**

11. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the equality strategy and the action plan for equality between women and men and equal opportunities for the period 2021–2027 and the strategy for equality, inclusion and Roma participation by 2030 and the accompanying action plans. It remains concerned, however, about reports that the Anti-Discrimination Act is not fully and effectively implemented and that the relevant authorities of the State Party do not promptly and effectively investigate complaints of discrimination (arts. 2, 26 and 27).

**12. The State Party should further strengthen its efforts to prevent, combat and eliminate all forms of discrimination, including indirect and intersectional discrimination, by ensuring the effective implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Act, strengthening enforcement mechanisms, ensuring the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of complaints of discrimination and guaranteeing access to effective remedies for victims.**

#### **Hate speech and hate crimes**

13. While noting the measures taken to address racism, hate speech and other forms of intolerance, including the establishment of the information offices, the Committee notes with concern that the Criminal Code does not contain a specific offence addressing hate crimes and that such acts are prosecuted under the broader category of “extremism”, the definition of which may lack sufficient clarity and raise issues with regard to the principle of legality of offences and penalties (arts. 2, 15, 19, 20 and 26).

**14. The State Party should review its criminal legislation to ensure that hate speech is explicitly criminalized on all prohibited grounds, including race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, and consider establishing a specific offence of hate speech, rather than prosecuting such conduct solely under broader offences such as extremism.**

15. The Committee notes with concern reports of persistently high levels of hate speech and hate-motivated attacks against a wide range of groups, including Roma, asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants and other non-citizens, women, Muslims, Jews, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, including in political discourse, the media and online. In particular, the Committee is concerned about reports that public statements by senior officials portraying migration as a threat to public security, together with certain media coverage, may contribute to a climate of hostility towards migrants and asylum-seekers and reinforce stereotypes based on ethnicity or religion. Reports also indicate that hate crimes are underreported and that discriminatory motives are not always systematically recorded or investigated by law enforcement authorities. The Committee is also concerned about reports of hate speech, particularly in the online environment, and that existing legal protections against such conduct, including those introduced through Act No. 316/2016 Coll. in 2016, are not consistently enforced (arts. 2, 19, 20, 26 and 27).

**16. The State Party should:**

**(a) Strengthen measures to prevent and combat hate speech and incitement to discrimination or violence on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, especially by politicians and high-level public officials, inter alia, through awareness-raising and training initiatives for public authorities, justice sector officials, private sector actors and teachers, to promote equality, tolerance and respect for diversity;**

**(b) Take measures to improve the reporting, recording and monitoring of hate crimes, including by systematically identifying and documenting discriminatory motives in criminal proceedings and by collecting disaggregated data on such offences;**

(c) **Ensure the prompt, impartial and effective investigation and prosecution of all acts of hate speech and hate-motivated offences, whether committed by State officials or private actors, and guarantee access for victims to effective remedies and adequate reparation.**

#### **Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons**

17. The Committee is concerned that the 2025 constitutional amendments, in particular those emphasizing sovereignty in matters of “national identity consisting mainly of basic cultural and ethical issues” and recognizing “only the biologically determined sexes of male and female”, may exacerbate discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. The Committee is also concerned about reports that procedures for legal gender recognition remain unduly restrictive and difficult to access in practice. It is further concerned that the State Party lacks a legal framework, such as registered partnerships or civil unions, for the recognition and protection of same-sex couples and that marriages between same-sex couples contracted in other European Union countries are not recognized. The Committee notes with concern the absence of explicit recognition of gender identity as prohibited grounds in hate crime legislation (arts. 2, 17 and 26).

**18. The State Party should strengthen measures to prevent and address discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. In particular, it should:**

(a) **Ensure full compliance with the Covenant’s provisions on non-discrimination, including with regard to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The State Party should also consider adopting a legal framework recognizing and protecting same-sex couples and ensure their equal access to rights and benefits, including in relation to family life, without discrimination;**

(b) **Review and amend relevant legislation and policies to ensure that procedures for legal gender recognition do not impose unnecessary medical or administrative requirements, in particular, to eliminate intrusive prerequisites, including psychiatric or other medical opinions, and establish clear, professional and respectful standards of healthcare for transgender and intersex persons, in line with the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the provisions of the Covenant;**

(c) **Take steps to establish a clear and comprehensive legal framework and to ensure that it explicitly recognizes gender identity as a motivating factor in hate crimes.**

#### **Discrimination against Roma**

19. While welcoming the measures taken to improve the situation of Roma, including those implemented under the strategy for equality, inclusion and Roma participation by 2030 and the accompanying action plans, the Committee notes with concern that members of the Roma community continue to experience marginalization and discrimination, particularly in the areas of education, housing, employment and healthcare. The Committee notes with concern that many Roma communities remain physically and functionally segregated from surrounding municipalities and face inadequate living conditions, including substandard housing, limited access to electricity and safe drinking water and insufficient fire safety infrastructure. The Committee is concerned that the segregation of Roma children in education persists in practice, including through their continued placement in so-called “special classes”, sometimes on the basis of assessment procedures that may not adequately ensure objective and culturally appropriate evaluation. The Committee is also concerned about the low participation rate in pre-primary education and high rate of early school dropout among Roma children (arts. 2, 24, 26 and 27).

**20. The State Party should strengthen efforts to ensure equal access for members of the Roma community to education, employment, housing and healthcare without discrimination. In particular, it should:**

(a) **Ensure the effective implementation of the strategy for equality, inclusion and Roma participation by 2030 and the accompanying action plans;**

(b) **Intensify efforts to address the marginalization of Roma communities and improve their living conditions, including by ensuring access to adequate housing, safe drinking water, electricity and basic infrastructure, including fire safety measures, in consultation with the affected communities;**

(c) **Abolish school segregation practices and intensify efforts to promote the integration of Roma children into mainstream education, including by strengthening measures to support Roma children in effectively gaining access to and benefiting from quality education at all levels, including secondary and higher education.**

#### **Gender equality**

21. While welcoming the measures taken to promote gender equality, including the adoption of the equality strategy and the action plan for equality between women and men and equal opportunities for the period 2021–2027, the Committee is concerned about reports of public campaigns promoting patriarchal attitudes and behaviours that may undermine the principle of gender equality. The Committee is also concerned about the low level of representation of women in the parliament, Government and senior managerial positions and notes the absence of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating progress in this area. Furthermore, while noting the measures taken by the State Party to address the gender pay gap, the Committee remains concerned about the persistent wage disparity between women and men (arts. 3 and 26).

22. **The State Party should intensify its efforts to ensure substantive equality between women and men in all spheres of public and private life. In particular, it should:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to raise public awareness, with a view to combating gender stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;**

(b) **Continue its efforts to increase the participation of women in political and public life and their representation in the public and private sectors, particularly in decision-making positions, including, where appropriate, through the use of temporary special measures, in order to give effect to the Covenant;**

(c) **Strengthen its efforts to eliminate the gender pay gap, including by ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, addressing structural barriers to the equal participation of women in the labour market and strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.**

#### **Violence against women and girls, including domestic violence**

23. While welcoming the measures taken to address violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, such as the 2021 amendments to the Act on victims of crime and the adoption of the action plan for the prevention and elimination of violence against women for the period 2022–2027, the Committee is concerned about information indicating low reporting and prosecution rates in cases of gender-based violence, which may be linked in part to limited trust in law enforcement authorities and the judiciary. In addition, the Committee notes its concern regarding the provision of victim assistance, including the reportedly insufficient number and uneven geographical distribution of shelters. The Committee notes with concern the decision to postpone the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (arts. 2, 3, 7 and 26).

24. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to address the underreporting of violence against women, including by ensuring access to information on rights and remedies and by conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the harmful impact and unacceptability of such violence;**

(b) **Ensure the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of all allegations of violence against women, the prosecution, and where appropriate punishment, of perpetrators with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offences and the provision of effective remedies to victims;**

(c) **Ensure the allocation of adequate resources to ensure access for victims to effective assistance and protection, including shelters and support services throughout the country, particularly for those in remote and rural areas;**

(d) **Ensure that judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers and health personnel receive appropriate training to enable them to deal with cases of gender-based violence in an effective and gender-sensitive manner;**

(e) **Consider ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.**

#### **Sexual and reproductive rights**

25. The Committee takes note of the State Party's official apology for the unlawful sterilization of, in particular, Roma women without their informed consent between 1966 and 2004 and of the ongoing preparation of draft legislation aimed at providing compensation to the victims. However, the Committee notes that limited progress has been made towards establishing a compensation mechanism during the reporting period, resulting in delays in ensuring access to effective remedies and adequate reparation for victims (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 7).

26. **The State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure that victims of unlawful sterilization have access to effective remedies and adequate reparation, including by promptly adopting legislation establishing an accessible and effective compensation mechanism and ensuring its effective implementation in practice.**

27. The Committee notes with concern reports of an increasing number of legislative initiatives seeking to restrict or prohibit access to abortion and reproductive health services, which, even when not adopted, have contributed to heightened polarization and stigma surrounding reproductive rights and those who seek or provide such services. Moreover, the Committee is concerned about reports of legal and practical barriers to access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including safe and legal abortion, resulting from the limited availability of information, financial constraints, mandatory waiting periods for women seeking an abortion, requirements to disclose the identity of women seeking an abortion to the authorities and restricted access in rural and remote areas. The Committee is also concerned that rape, including marital or intimate partner rape, is not recognized as legal grounds for access to abortion. The Committee is further concerned about reports indicating shortcomings in measures relating to sexual and reproductive health, including with regard to access to menstrual hygiene products and the provision of age-appropriate and inclusive comprehensive sex education in schools (arts. 6 and 7).

28. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Bearing in mind paragraph 8 of the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life, ensure access for women to sexual and reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion without legal or practical barriers and affordable contraceptives, including emergency contraceptives, in particular for women and girls living in rural areas, women living in poverty, women with disabilities and women belonging to ethnic or religious minority groups;**

(b) **Take measures to ensure access to menstrual hygiene products and to provide age-appropriate and inclusive comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in schools and ensure that legal and policy measures do not restrict the provision of such education.**

#### **Prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and of the excessive use of force**

29. The Committee welcomes the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as

the formal apology issued in relation to the 2013 police intervention in the town of Moldava nad Bodvou and notes the information provided on training activities for law enforcement officials. It remains concerned, however, about the allegations of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials, in particular against Roma persons, and about the low number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in such cases. The Committee notes with concern reports regarding the limited institutional independence of the Inspection Service Office, which remains formally part of the police force. While welcoming the State Party's stated intention to amend the Criminal Code to introduce a definition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Committee notes with concern that such amendments are not currently included in the legislative plan (art. 7).

**30. The State Party should take robust measures to eradicate torture and ill-treatment by, inter alia:**

(a) **Taking appropriate measures to ensure that all allegations of torture and ill-treatment are promptly and thoroughly investigated by an effective, fully independent and impartial body, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, are sanctioned with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence and that victims are provided with full reparation, including rehabilitation and adequate compensation;**

(b) **Strengthening the institutional independence of the Inspection Service Office to ensure its ability to function as an impartial and effective oversight mechanism;**

(c) **Revising the definition of torture set out in the Criminal Code so as to bring it into full conformity with article 7 of the Covenant and other internationally established norms;**

(d) **Strengthening measures to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by ensuring regular and practical human rights training for judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials, including on the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information-Gathering.**

#### **Treatment of persons deprived of their liberty and conditions of detention**

31. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Act on the execution of imprisonment sentences and the Act on the execution of detention, which are expected to enter into force on 1 July 2026 and are aimed at improving detention conditions and strengthening safeguards for persons deprived of their liberty. The Committee is concerned, however, about reports that in practice persons deprived of their liberty, including minors, may not fully enjoy all fundamental safeguards from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty, in particular access to a lawyer and the right to notify a family member or another person of their choice of their detention. It is also concerned that the exercise of such safeguards may be restricted under certain procedural rules, including where notification is considered likely to hinder the clarification or investigation of the case (art. 9).

**32. The State Party should take the measures necessary to ensure that its legislation and practices are fully consistent with article 9 of the Covenant, in the light of the Committee's general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person. It should also continue to strengthen its efforts to ensure that conditions of detention comply with relevant international standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).**

#### **Treatment of aliens, including refugees and asylum-seekers**

33. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State Party to provide temporary protection to persons fleeing the conflict in Ukraine and the steps taken to digitalize administrative procedures related to migration. However, it remains concerned about reports that detention continues to be used in immigration procedures and in cases involving children

and unaccompanied minors. The Committee also notes with concern reports of delays in the processing of applications for refugee status (arts. 9, 12, 13 and 24).

**34. The State Party should:**

(a) **Ensure that all persons seeking international protection have access, without discrimination, to the State Party's territory and to fair and efficient procedures for the individual determination of refugee status or other forms of international protection, in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement and the safeguards against arbitrary detention;**

(b) **Ensure that immigration detention is used only as a measure of last resort, for the shortest possible period and in accordance with the Covenant and that alternatives to detention are effectively applied. The State Party should refrain from detaining children, including unaccompanied minors, in the context of immigration procedures and ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all decisions affecting them;**

(c) **Strengthen training for border guards and immigration officials to ensure that the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees under the Covenant and other applicable international standards are fully respected.**

**Access to justice and independence of the judiciary**

35. The Committee takes note of the measures undertaken by the State Party to address corruption within the judiciary, including the criminal law reform package of 2023–2024. It notes with concern, however, the dissolution of the Office of the Special Prosecutor and other bodies responsible for addressing high-level corruption and organized crime. It also notes with concern the 2020 amendment to the Act on courts, which authorizes the executive to remove members of the Judicial Council, as well as public criticism of judges by government officials. The Committee is concerned that such developments may weaken institutional safeguards for the independence of the judiciary and prosecution services. While taking note of the ongoing reform of the judicial system, the Committee is concerned about reports of difficulties in implementing the reform, including the number of judges and staff, which create barriers to access to justice (art. 14).

**36. The State Party should:**

(a) **Take immediate measures, in law and in practice, to ensure the full independence and impartiality of the judiciary and the functional autonomy of the prosecution service and guarantee that both are able to operate without undue pressure or interference from the legislative and executive branches;**

(b) **Ensure that procedures for the selection, appointment, suspension, removal and disciplining of judges, prosecutors and Judicial Council members are in compliance with the Covenant and relevant international standards;**

(c) **Accelerate the effective implementation of the reform of the judicial system, with a view to ensuring that the newly reorganized courts are fully staffed and operational in order to guarantee that justice is accessible to all.**

**Elimination of slavery, servitude and trafficking in persons**

37. The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State Party on measures taken to combat trafficking in persons during the reporting period, including the adoption of the national programme for combating trafficking in persons for the period 2024–2028 and efforts to strengthen the legislative framework to address trafficking-related offences. The Committee remains concerned, however, about reports of shortcomings in the identification of victims of trafficking and the misclassification of offences, reportedly resulting in the lenient sentencing of perpetrators. It is concerned about the obstacles faced by victims of trafficking in obtaining compensation and the insufficient safeguards to ensure that victims of trafficking are protected from criminal liability for unlawful acts committed as a direct consequence of their exploitation. The Committee is also concerned about the growing use of online platforms for the recruitment and exploitation of victims (arts. 7, 8 and 26).

38. **The State Party should intensify its efforts to prevent, combat and punish trafficking in persons, particularly concerning women and children. In particular, it should:**

(a) **Ensure the effective identification of victims, including through the screening of persons in vulnerable situations, such as asylum-seekers, unaccompanied children, refugees and migrants, and ensure that victims have access to protection and assistance services;**

(b) **Ensure that all cases of trafficking in persons are thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished with appropriate penalties and that victims are provided with full reparation, within criminal proceedings, including rehabilitation and adequate compensation. It should also ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to protect victims of trafficking from criminal liability for unlawful acts committed as a direct consequence of their exploitation;**

(c) **Provide specialized training to relevant State officials, including judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers, on the identification and referral of victims of trafficking, the proper classification of trafficking offences and the imposition of effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties;**

(d) **Strengthen efforts to prevent and combat the recruitment and exploitation of victims of trafficking through online platforms, including by enhancing monitoring and investigative capacities and strengthening cooperation with relevant service providers.**

#### **Freedom of thought, conscience and religious belief**

39. The Committee notes with concern the 2017 amendment to Act No. 308/1991 Coll. on freedom of religious belief and the status of religious communities, which raised the minimum membership requirement for the registration of churches and religious societies to 50,000 adult members. While noting the State Party's stated objective of preventing speculative registrations, the Committee is concerned that this requirement may have a disproportionate impact on smaller or minority religious communities. It notes with concern that limiting certain rights or benefits, including public funding and the provision of religious instruction in public schools, to registered communities may have a discriminatory effect on minority religions (arts. 18 and 26).

40. **Recalling article 18 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 22 (1993) on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the State Party should:**

(a) **Ensure that its legal framework governing the registration of religious communities is fully in line with the provisions of the Covenant;**

(b) **Refrain from imposing restrictions that go beyond those permitted under article 18 (3) of the Covenant and ensure that registration requirements do not result in the discriminatory treatment of religious minority groups;**

(c) **Consider reviewing the Act on freedom of religious belief and the status of religious communities and related legislation and practices to ensure their compliance with its obligations under the Covenant.**

#### **Freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and human rights defenders**

41. While welcoming the implementation of the European Media Freedom Act of the European Commission and the steps taken to reduce criminal penalties for defamation, the Committee is concerned that defamation remains an offence under section 373 of the Criminal Code (Act No. 300/2005 Coll.). The Committee is also concerned about reports of an increase in violence and harassment against journalists and human rights defenders. It is further concerned by reports that Act No. 157/2024 Coll. on Slovak Television and Radio, revising the procedures for appointments to public media governing bodies, may undermine the independence of public service broadcasting by increasing governmental influence over its governance and editorial discretion. The Committee notes that the European Union

Directives and Council of Europe recommendations relating to strategic lawsuits against public participation have yet to be implemented in domestic law in the State Party (art. 19).

42. **The State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure the full enjoyment of freedom of expression, in accordance with article 19 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. In particular, it should:**

(a) **Consider decriminalizing defamation and, in any event, ensure that criminal law is applied only in the most serious cases, bearing in mind that imprisonment is never an appropriate penalty for defamation;**

(b) **Ensure that journalists and human rights defenders can exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisals and that all threats, intimidation and acts of violence against them are promptly, thoroughly and effectively investigated, perpetrators prosecuted and punished and victims provided with appropriate remedies;**

(c) **Ensure that the governance and appointment procedures of public service broadcasting bodies guarantee their independence and editorial freedom;**

(d) **Ensure the prompt and full implementation of the provisions concerning strategic lawsuits against public participation.**

#### **Freedoms of peaceful assembly and association**

43. The Committee is concerned about the provisions of Act No. 166/2024 Coll. that prescribe restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly, including provisions introducing blanket prohibitions on peaceful assemblies within 50 metres of certain public buildings and authorizing broad grounds for municipalities to prohibit peaceful assemblies, which may unduly restrict the exercise of this right under article 21 of the Covenant. The Committee is also concerned about the adoption of Act No. 109/2025, amending Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on non-profit organizations, which required that such organizations receiving more than €5,000 from non-Slovak sources to publicly disclose their funders, which may have a chilling effect on the financing of civil society organizations and human rights defenders. While noting the 2025 decision of the Constitutional Court finding the Act incompatible with the rights to freedom of association, privacy and freedom of information, the Committee is concerned about the potential chilling effect of measures in this area, including those aimed at strengthening oversight and transparency of the activities and financing of non-profit organizations, on the exercise of freedom of association under the Covenant (arts. 21 and 22).

44. **The State Party should:**

(a) **In accordance with article 21 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly, review and consider amending Act No. 166/2024 Coll. to ensure that individuals can fully exercise their right of peaceful assembly and that any restrictions on this right are in compliance with the strict requirements of necessity and proportionality;**

(b) **Ensure that any legislation regulating the oversight and transparency of the activities and financing of non-governmental organizations is fully consistent with article 22 of the Covenant and does not impose unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions on freedom of association and does not unduly impair the ability of these organizations to operate freely and effectively.**

#### **D. Dissemination and follow-up**

45. **The State Party should widely disseminate the Covenant, the first Optional Protocol thereto, its fifth periodic report and the present concluding observations with a view to raising awareness of the rights enshrined in the Covenant among the judicial, legislative and administrative authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country and the general public. The State Party should ensure that the report and the present concluding observations are translated into the official language of the State Party.**

46. In accordance with rule 75 (1), of the Committee's rules of procedure, the State Party is requested to provide, by 19 March 2029, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in paragraphs 10 (national human rights institution), 18 (discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons) and 44 (freedoms of peaceful assembly and association) above.

47. In line with the Committee's predictable review cycle, the State Party will receive, in 2032, the Committee's list of issues prior to the submission of the sixth periodic report and will be expected to submit within one year its replies, which will constitute its sixth periodic report. The Committee also requests the State Party, in preparing the report, to broadly consult with civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. The next constructive dialogue with the State Party will take place in Geneva in 2034.

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