



# Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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## Committee against Torture Eighty-second session

### Summary record of the 2184th meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 15 April 2025, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Heller

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(*continued*)

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\* No summary records were issued for the 2180th to 2183rd meetings.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 19 of the Convention** *(continued)*

*Fifth periodic report of Armenia (CAT/C/ARM/5; CAT/C/ARM/QPR/5)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Armenia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Armenia**, introducing her country's fifth periodic report (CAT/C/ARM/5), said that her Government had prioritized the fight against torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, which were prohibited under the Constitution, as a strategic objective across all sectoral strategies and was committed to pursuing a policy of zero tolerance for perpetrators.
3. Under the human rights action plans covering the periods 2020–2022 and 2023–2025, the Government had amended criminal legislation to support efforts to attain that objective; conducted mass training programmes for law enforcement, healthcare and judicial personnel; developed guidelines for investigating cases of torture in line with international best practices; conducted awareness-raising activities; installed audiovisual recording equipment in interrogation rooms and improved conditions in penal establishments and courthouse detention facilities; strengthened reporting mechanisms; and enhanced the capabilities of the Investigative Committee. Under the 2024–2026 Human Rights Action Plan, police and medical personnel would be trained in documenting, reporting and investigating cases of torture. Efforts would be made to enhance the role and effectiveness of voluntary organizations in monitoring detention facilities, and standard operating procedures for the use of force by police officers would be developed, along with other measures to reduce the risk of a disproportionate use of force and recourse to the use of special law enforcement equipment during mass protests.
4. The establishment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2023 pursuant to the 2020–2022 Police Reform Strategy had strengthened civilian oversight of the police. The independence of the police disciplinary proceedings conducted by the Internal Security and Anti-Corruption Department had been reinforced by placing it under the Ministry. The penitentiary and probation strategies for 2019–2023 and 2023–2026 and an action plan on suicide prevention for 2021–2022, which were underpinned by the 2022–2026 Judicial and Legal Reform Strategy, had helped to improve detention conditions and medical documentation practices.
5. The new Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Penitentiary Code had entered into force in 2022. Their implementation was currently being assessed with a view to addressing any shortcomings that might arise. The provision on the crime of torture was now in full alignment with article 1 of the Convention. It covered crimes of torture committed by public officials and recognized the purposive element of the crime. In line with article 4 of the Convention, the penalties established for that crime took into account its grave nature. Perpetrators of acts of torture could not be pardoned or granted amnesty, and no statute of limitations could be applied to that offence. The same applied to cases in which public officials abused or exceeded their authority by committing acts or making threats of violence. Under the Criminal Procedure Code, which took a human rights-based approach, the threshold for initiating investigations into complaints of torture was very low, and unfounded complaints were filtered out only after the necessary preliminary investigation had been undertaken. Although, as a result, more criminal cases had been initiated, those measures constituted an important procedural safeguard and component of the zero-tolerance policy with respect to torture. During a periodic visit, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment had found the prescribed legal safeguards to be satisfactory and the new procedural legislation to constitute an additional guarantee.
6. The rights of arrested persons set out in article 110 of the new Criminal Procedure Code were fully aligned with international standards and included the rights to notify a third party of their detention, have access to a lawyer and a medical professional, and be informed both orally – from the moment of deprivation of liberty – and in writing of their rights and obligations and the reasons for their arrest. Under the new Penitentiary Code, individual

medical examinations of newly arrived detainees were to be conducted within a period of 24 hours and, unless the examining doctor requested otherwise, out of earshot and sight of non-medical staff. In 2021, the Government had adopted a procedure under which prisoners who submitted complaints of torture or ill-treatment had to be given a medical examination, the report sent to the appropriate investigative body and the Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry of Health notified. Penal establishments had locked complaints boxes. In addition, a confidential postal service had been set up for receiving complaints from detainees and an electronic platform for whistle-blowers had been established.

7. All persons being placed in police detention had to undergo a medical examination. Patrol service police officers were equipped with body cameras when carrying out arrests, and community police officers detailed to guard police detention facilities would also be equipped with them. Under the law establishing the new Police Guard, which would enter into force in November 2025, policing activities would be shifted from a militarized to a modern approach with a special focus on crowd management. That law set out clear criteria in line with international standards for determining the legality and proportionality of the use of force and coercive measures by Police Guard officers. The Law on Police had been amended to extend the application of those criteria to all police officers.

8. The Criminal Procedure Code provided that, unless physically impossible, almost all types of investigative actions, including interrogations, were to be audiovisually recorded from beginning to end without interruptions or editing. In the event of an interruption, the investigative action was to be suspended and the causes of the interruption registered. The recording was to be made accessible to the detainee concerned or his or her representative. Under the Law on Advocacy, lawyers could communicate privately with their clients, and detainees had the right to inform a third party of their detention. The new Penitentiary Code provided that lawyers were entitled to meet freely and confidentially with their clients in places of detention. Detainees could request meetings with their lawyers at weekends and on holidays and without restrictions on their frequency or duration. There had been no complaints regarding the ability of lawyers to enter prisons in recent years.

9. In 2021, the mandate for investigating acts of torture had been transferred to a dedicated division of the Investigative Committee staffed with eight investigators. Allegations of torture or ill-treatment committed by members of the Investigative Committee were reviewed by the Anti-Corruption Committee. As of 2024, 386 criminal proceedings had been investigated, 133 cases had been terminated and one case involving four individuals had been referred to the courts. Two judgments finding that acts of torture had been committed, neither of which had yet entered into force, had been rendered in recent years. The proportion of cases that had been referred to the courts was relatively small because of the thoroughness with which all reported cases were now investigated and because the degree of physical force that had been applied was often found to have been appropriate. In addition to acts of police violence that had been investigated under articles 441 (2) (1) and 450 of the Criminal Code, police officers had been convicted of obstructing the lawful professional activities of journalists during protests in 2015 and 2018, and those officers had subsequently been dismissed.

10. A medical centre had been established to serve prisoners. That centre had subsequently been transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Health, thereby increasing the independence of its medical personnel.

11. Nine of the 33 existing police detention facilities had been closed, and the operation of 2 more would be suspended in 2025. Both the remaining facilities and existing penal establishments, two of which had been closed in 2024, would be renovated in order to improve conditions, thereby upholding the rights of detainees. Twenty-two new detainee transportation vehicles meeting international standards had been acquired in 2024 and 12 more were being equipped in ways designed to safeguard detainees' dignity. One vehicle would be equipped to transport detainees with special needs. A special centralized electronic system for registering all convicted persons housed in penal establishments was in operation, and a similar tool for registering arrested persons was being developed. Under the new Criminal Code, alternatives to preventive detention, such as house arrest and administrative supervision, had been introduced. As of 2024, some 1,000 persons were under house arrest and 617 were under administrative supervision.

12. Under the Civil Code, victims of torture could now obtain compensation for both material and non-material damages. Victims also had the right to rehabilitation services, which included compensation for medical care and access to free psychological and legal assistance. In 2025, a study concerning the possibility of establishing a rehabilitation centre had been undertaken as part of the Human Rights Action Plan.

13. A new strategy for ensuring gender equality and for effectively combating domestic and gender-based violence was being developed and would be adopted in the coming months. Under the new Criminal Code, the definition of the term “close relative” included former and current spouses and participants in marital relationships. In the majority of crimes involving physical, sexual or psychological violence, the involvement of a partner or former partner was now defined as an aggravating circumstance that entailed more severe penalties.

14. The Government was gravely concerned by the continued imprisonment, ill-treatment and torture – including in the forms of staged trials, forced confessions and prolonged psychological abuse – of Armenian prisoners of war and other detainees held by the Government of Azerbaijan. It recalled that the Committee had expressed deep concern about the conduct of that State Party and the ongoing detention of 23 Armenian individuals in its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Azerbaijan ([CAT/C/AZE/CO/5](#)). The situation continued to pose serious and ongoing risks to the rights, safety and dignity of the individuals in question.

15. **Mr. Kessing** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would be grateful to receive information about specific rulings in which Armenian courts had applied the principle enshrined in article 5 (3) of the Constitution, whereby, in the event of a conflict, international treaties ratified by Armenia took precedence over national laws. He would welcome details of any cases in which, in line with article 81 of the Constitution, the practices of the Committee had been taken into account when interpreting provisions of the Constitution concerning basic rights and freedoms.

16. It would be helpful to receive clarification as to whether the apparently narrow definition of “State officials” in Armenian law would prevent, for example, persons who worked in psychiatric institutions and medical personnel from being investigated if complaints of torture had been made against them. If so, he wondered whether, in line with its obligations under the Convention, the State Party was considering amending that definition.

17. He wished to know whether there was now a complete ban on applying statutes of limitations to all acts of torture and whether they were still applied to that crime in civil cases brought by persons seeking redress and compensation. A criminal case against police officers accused of torturing Mr. Grisha Virabyan in 2004 had been dismissed because the statute of limitations of 10 years on that offence had expired. It would be useful to learn what decision the Court of Cassation had taken with respect to that case following the issuance of an advisory opinion by the European Court of Human Rights on 26 April 2022 that, in line with the principle of *nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege* enshrined in article 7 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights), the prosecution of an offence for which the statute of limitations under national law had expired could not be revived. Had the police officers who tortured Mr. Virabyan been held accountable?

18. The Committee would welcome confirmation from the delegation that evidence extracted by torture or ill-treatment was excluded from court proceedings in all cases. Could it provide any examples of cases in which courts had disallowed material on that basis?

19. He wished to know whether the legislation necessary for the full implementation of the country’s new criminal codes had been adopted. He would also welcome up-to-date statistical information on the number of remand prisoners in detention facilities and clarification as to whether that number had decreased since the new criminal codes had been introduced. Further information on the use of electronic monitoring and other alternatives to detention would also be appreciated.

20. In the light of the decision of the Council of Europe to conclude its supervision of the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Virabyan*

*v. Armenia* and related cases, which addressed ill-treatment in police custody and inadequate investigations, it would be useful to receive information on the status of police reform efforts. He specifically wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that all arrested persons were informed of the reasons for their arrest and had effective access to legal counsel. He also wished to know whether the audiovisual recording of police interrogations was mandatory, whether all police facilities had been fitted with such recording equipment and whether those recordings were routinely reviewed for signs of torture or ill-treatment.

21. The Committee had received reports that police officers had been accused of using excessive force during demonstrations and protests held between 2015 and 2024. He would therefore be interested to learn about any further initiatives that the State Party had taken to prevent the excessive, including lethal, use of force by law enforcement officers during such events. He also wondered whether any relevant training had been provided and whether the United Nations Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests had been incorporated into police training programmes.

22. It had been reported that very few criminal cases involving alleged acts of torture were referred to the courts. In that context, he would welcome updated information on the number of investigations into complaints of torture and ill-treatment conducted over the previous three years, the number of resulting court cases and the outcomes of those proceedings. He wished to know whether any public officials had ever been found guilty of torture or ill-treatment and, if so, what penalties had been imposed. He would also appreciate confirmation regarding reports that the new criminal codes had made it more difficult to assist alleged torture victims in court because they established a 30 per cent tax on fees paid to lawyers assisting prisoners or potential victims of torture.

23. He would welcome information on the Investigative Committee of Armenia, established in 2022, in particular with regard to its independence from the police authorities it investigated. He also wished to receive details on steps taken to ensure the prompt and effective investigation of complaints involving police officers. In that regard, he wished to know whether police officers accused of torture were immediately suspended from duty during the investigation and what capacity-building initiatives had been undertaken to strengthen the independence, efficiency and responsiveness of the investigative bodies handling such allegations.

24. The State Party had repeatedly informed the Committee that it was investigating the excessive use of force by police officers during the protests held in March 2008. In view of the apparently slow progress of that investigation, he would welcome an update on its current status and on any additional investigations undertaken into the use of force during protests. He also wished to know how many offending police officers had been identified and held accountable through disciplinary, civil or criminal proceedings and what penalties had been imposed.

25. The Committee had received reports alleging that both Armenian and Azerbaijani forces had violated international humanitarian and human rights law during the armed conflict between the two countries. He therefore wished to know whether Armenia had taken steps to ensure that war crimes allegedly committed by Armenian forces during the conflict were promptly and impartially investigated by an independent body.

26. He would welcome confirmation of reports indicating that a new expedited asylum procedure imposed a 15-day deadline for the submission of asylum applications by individuals entering Armenia irregularly or those subject to extradition or criminal prosecution. If accurate, he wished to know how many asylum requests had been rejected over the previous three years because they had missed that deadline. It would also be useful to receive clarification on whether asylum-seekers were being prosecuted for unlawful entry into Armenia and, if so, whether the State Party intended to take steps to end that practice. Additionally, he would appreciate information on measures taken to ensure that asylum-seekers held in detention had access to fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures, including appeals with suspensive effect on deportation orders.

27. In October 2024, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions had reiterated its recommendation that a clear, transparent and participatory selection and

appointment process should be established for selecting and appointing members of the decision-making body of the Office of the Human Rights Defender. He wished to know whether the State Party had taken or intended to take steps to follow up on that recommendation. He would be grateful if the delegation could confirm whether the salaries of the staff of the Office of the Human Rights Defender were lower than those of personnel in comparable public sector roles and, if so, whether measures were planned to address that disparity.

28. To better understand the role of the Office of the Human Rights Defender in preventing torture, he would welcome information on the number of complaints of torture or ill-treatment received by the Office over the previous three years and the outcome of those complaints. It would also be useful to learn whether the Human Rights Defender had the authority to recommend redress for victims or the criminal prosecution of perpetrators and what steps the State Party undertook when the Defender concluded that an individual had been subjected to torture or ill-treatment. In addition, he wished to know whether the Defender had ever initiated legal action in Armenian courts regarding such cases. Information on the State Party's follow-up to the recommendations made by the Office of the Human Rights Defender in its role as the national preventive mechanism would also be welcome.

29. Lastly, he wondered whether the State Party intended to make the declaration provided for under article 22 of the Convention, thereby recognizing the Committee's competence to receive and consider individual communications submitted by or on behalf of individuals under its jurisdiction who claimed to be victims of violations of the Convention.

30. **Ms. Racu** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would appreciate an update on any strategic documents or policies outlining capacity-building activities for law enforcement personnel, judges and prosecutors. She wondered what oversight mechanisms were in place to ensure that police officers received appropriate training on the use of force and were held accountable for misconduct or mistreatment when making arrests or taking persons into custody.

31. It would also be useful to learn what measures were in place to ensure that training on the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) and the prohibition of torture was being provided in practice. In particular, she wished to know what measures were in place to ensure that such training was reflected in judicial decisions in cases involving allegations of torture-tainted evidence. She would welcome clarification on how training needs for target groups were assessed and whether training programmes were informed by practical examples drawn from actual cases or documented human rights violations. She would be grateful for details on the training methodology used in that regard and an explanation of how the effectiveness of capacity-building programmes was evaluated.

32. She wondered whether medical personnel working with prisoners had received training on the Istanbul Protocol and whether there were plans to make such training mandatory. In addition, she wished to know whether the State Party had conducted any training programmes on the prevention of torture and the appropriate use of force for military personnel, intelligence officers and security guards, particularly in the context of ongoing tensions related to the military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Details on the number of officers who had undergone such training and confirmation as to whether participation in such programmes had been made mandatory would also be welcome.

33. The Committee was interested in receiving up-to-date information on any reforms aimed at improving the living conditions and treatment of inmates and on measures taken to enhance oversight and accountability within the prison system. She welcomed the various improvements made in the prison system since the last constructive dialogue with the State Party, notably with regard to conditions of detention, including the improvement of plumbing, ventilation and heating, the closure or refurbishment of quarantine blocks and the enhancement of food quality. However, she would be grateful for an update on planned changes to other facilities of concern, such as the Kosh, Hrazdan, Nubarashen, Goris, Vanadzor and Yerevan-Kentron prisons.

34. The issue of prison overcrowding remained relevant, in particular at Artik prison, where the living space available per person was below the standard of 4 m<sup>2</sup>, and at Armavir prison, due to the high rates of pretrial detention and of imprisonment in general.

Accordingly, she would welcome information on the total number of incarcerated individuals, including juveniles, in each of the past four years, disaggregated by age and sex, as well as information on how prison holding capacity measured up against the number of inmates in each facility and on steps taken to address overcrowding.

35. Concerns also remained regarding the fact that inmates apparently had to rely on their own resources to meet their basic needs, the use of disciplinary measures that contravened the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the European Prison Rules, particularly in terms of communication with family members, and a failure to adjust security arrangements for inmates who exhibited good behaviour. Consequently, the Committee wished to learn about the specific rehabilitation programmes in place for prisoners and about any educational, vocational and psychological support services designed to facilitate their reintegration into society. Information on the rates of recidivism and successful reintegration of former prisoners into society would also be welcome.

36. While the transfer of responsibility for prison medical services to the Ministry of Health had been an important step in ensuring the independence of medical professionals working with persons deprived of their liberty, it appeared that difficulties persisted in such areas as access to the e-health system, internal document management, the timely delivery of medication, confidentiality of personal information, the provision of psychiatric care and a lack of personnel to accompany prisoners to outside healthcare facilities. Therefore, the Committee would appreciate information on the degree of independence of prison doctors from the prison administration, access to specialist treatment for inmates requiring complex care, measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, oversight of healthcare services in prisons, harm reduction programmes for drug users, programmes for prisoners living with HIV and the treatment offered to prisoners with disabilities. Current information would also be welcome on the number of medical professionals, particularly psychiatric specialists, providing services in prisons and on the availability of medical equipment and medicine in prisons, including the equipment and medications required to address the specific needs of women inmates. It would be helpful to know what protocols, procedures and practices were in place in prisons for documenting and reporting injuries from torture, ill-treatment or violence, whether the inmates concerned and their lawyers had access to the corresponding medical reports, what training medical professionals received on the identification and reporting of signs of torture and ill-treatment and what safeguards were in place to protect those professionals from reprisals.

37. In the light of the rising numbers of suicides and of self-harm incidents involving persons in custody, which appeared to be the result, in part, of a lack of effective and timely psychological care, the State Party was invited to provide further details on the measures taken to prevent violence, self-mutilation, suicide and deaths in custody, on the nature and effectiveness of the suicide and self-harm risk assessment procedure introduced in 2023 and on how those risk assessments were taken into account in determining where inmates would be housed. Furthermore, it would be useful to know whether there were safe cells in which persons at risk of suicide were placed, what specific training and resources were provided to prison staff for the prevention and management of suicidal tendencies, self-harming behaviours and inter-prisoner violence, how such incidents were documented and how accountability was ensured in cases where a failure on the part of prison personnel to take appropriate action led to adverse outcomes.

38. Against the backdrop of the continued influence of criminal subcultures in places of deprivation of liberty, which undermined the maintenance of order and led to the unequal treatment of prisoners, she would welcome information on the measures taken: to break up informal hierarchies in prisons and dismantle the criminal gangs that wielded informal power in many of the State Party's prisons; to ensure that all prisoners – regardless of their social status or affiliation, but especially minors, LGBTQ+ individuals and persons with mental health conditions – had equal protection under the law and were not subjected to discrimination or abuse, including by other inmates; to tackle corruption among prison staff who might tolerate or actively facilitate the maintenance of informal hierarchies within the prison system; and to support victims of abuse or coercion by informal leaders within the

prison population in reporting mistreatment or exploitation and obtaining justice and protection from retaliation.

39. Given the critical staffing shortages existing in the country's prisons, the Committee wished to hear whether the current staff-to-prisoner ratio met international standards and what specific measures the Government had taken in recent years to promote staff retention, to increase the number of prison personnel, including female custodial staff, and to fill current vacancies.

40. **Mr. Contesse** said that the Committee was eager to hear what measures the State Party had taken or would take to eliminate violence against children in institutional settings, including sexual violence and punitive educational methods. Such measures might include the establishment of a procedure for recording and reporting possible and confirmed cases of violence against and among children and successful and attempted suicides and self-harm by children, the establishment of mechanisms that children could use to report violence and violations of their rights and means of protecting them from reprisals and, most significantly, the introduction of a legal ban on corporal punishment of children in all settings, including in care institutions.

41. With reference to the notorious case reported in 2023 of the systematic use of unauthorized physical restraints on persons in a residential psychiatric facility, he wished to know what measures had been taken to eliminate unauthorized physical restraints and other inhuman practices in care institutions, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention against Torture and other human rights standards.

42. Lastly, in the context of the reported peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, he wondered whether amnesties or pardons were envisaged for individuals charged with or convicted of torture, which would run counter to the Convention.

43. **Mr. Buchwald** said that he wished to know whether any Azerbaijani prisoners remained in the custody of Armenia, what measures were in place to ensure that allegations of abuse against prisoners of war were fully and impartially investigated, whether any such allegations had in fact been investigated and, if so, what the outcome of those investigations had been. He also wished to know whether arrangements for the transfer of prisoners who might have been involved in torture or any other serious breach of the Geneva Conventions included a requirement for the receiving State to thoroughly investigate the alleged acts. He would also like to learn what compensation procedures were in place for Armenian detainees returning from Azerbaijan who might have been subjected to abuse while detained.

44. The delegation was invited to describe what action had been taken to condemn racist hate speech, in particular against Azerbaijani nationals or persons of Azerbaijani ethnic origin, implement the order of the International Court of Justice of 22 February 2023 and address the relevant concerns raised in 2024 by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

45. **Mr. Tuzmukhamedov** said that he regretted that, given the Committee's current language restrictions, he was unable to address the delegation in the other official United Nations language in which they might otherwise have interacted. He would welcome further information on the regulation of the use of force by teams deployed for crowd control and the relevant training those teams received. He would be interested in hearing whether the equipment used in crowd control operations — whether in prisons or other settings — was assessed for its potential to be misused to cause excessive injury and suffering, where the equipment was manufactured and how strictly its manufacturing was regulated.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.*

46. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Government's findings based on its ongoing efforts to monitor the implementation of the new Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code had led to the passage of 13 legislative amendments to date. International law prevailed over national law, and its standards were directly applicable in all courts of law. In its decision following the advisory opinion of the European Court of Human Rights relating to the case of *Virabyan v. Armenia*, the Court of Cassation had stated that the international legal standard should prevail. It was no longer permissible to apply a statute of limitations to torture cases, however. Victims could apply for civil remedies one year after



the verdict had been handed down in a criminal case, including cases involving charges of torture.

47. Evidence obtained by means of torture could not be submitted in criminal cases. Over 52 per cent of prisoners were in pretrial detention. The regulations required for the full implementation of the new Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code had been adopted, and those regulations provided for the widespread application of alternatives to pretrial detention, including the use of electronic monitoring devices. Video recording was mandatory in police stations. In its most recent annual report, the Office of the Human Rights Defender had not cited any allegations of a failure to record police interviews. The law had been amended to ensure that a psychologist licensed by the Ministry of Justice must be present during police interviews of children in order to prevent their revictimization.

48. **A representative of Armenia** said that asylum-seekers and victims of trafficking in persons were not prosecuted for illegal entry into the country. The Criminal Code contained a number of provisions derived from international legal standards on asylum, including article 31 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Following consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a deadline of 15 days for asylum applications had been introduced for persons who had entered the country illegally, faced criminal charges or had been arrested on suspicion of a criminal offence. Between 2022 and 2024, the restriction had applied to 154 cases, of which 63 had been rejected and 28 had been approved, with the remainder either suspended or not processed owing to their late submission.

49. **A representative of Armenia** said that her Government worked in close cooperation with the Office of the Human Rights Defender. The Office had not reported any cases of non-cooperation on the part of the Government. The Ministry of Justice ensured access to all prison documentation. All the observations made by the national preventive mechanism and the Office were taken into account in the legislation and policy development process. Most of the Office's recommendations had been incorporated into recent prison and police station renovation projects. The Office could submit amicus briefs to the Constitutional Court and file cases relating to laws and regulations with the Administrative Court. Under a new anti-discrimination law that was currently being drafted, the Office would be able to refer discrimination cases to the courts.

50. Upon receiving the Office's annual report, the Prime Minister assigned responsibility for follow-up on each recommendation to the relevant agency. The Human Rights Defender was an important government partner and was often invited to provide advice in internal ministerial discussions. In 2023, the national preventive mechanism had introduced an electronic system for following up on visit reports. According to its annual report, a majority of its recommendations had been implemented. The Government was not currently considering accepting the Committee's competence to consider individual communications under article 22 of the Convention.

51. The national human rights strategy and its related action plan listed all the public officials who should receive torture prevention training. The Penitentiary Code provided for the training of staff and the assessment of the quality of that training. The existing training programme for prison staff covered international human rights standards on torture and ill-treatment, including the Istanbul Protocol, relevant national laws and conflict management and communication skills. In cooperation with international partners such as the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Justice was currently developing a new human rights training course for prison staff which would cover the pertinent international standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules. The Nelson Mandela Rules had been translated into Armenian and circulated to prison staff.

52. Torture prevention training was also covered in the national policing strategy, and the related action plan provided for the development of a methodology for assessing its quality. Generally, training participants were tested before and after course completion to gauge how much they had learned. Training on the Istanbul Protocol for police officers was being developed. The Academy of Justice provided mandatory training on torture prevention for judges, prosecutors and investigators. International experts were also invited to speak about

international best practices at the Academy and the Police Educational Complex. The Ministry of Health offered specific training for medical personnel.

53. In 2024, the national preventive mechanism had provided training to the staff in all detention facilities. A decree had been issued to ensure that forms for the documentation of signs of torture in line with the Istanbul Protocol were available and used. In 2024, 67 reports based on the Istanbul Protocol had been submitted. A bill providing for the application of the Istanbul Protocol by the police force had passed its second reading and was expected to be adopted by the parliament within a month's time.

54. During the reporting period, renovation works had resolved some of the issues concerning detention facilities raised by international partners, including the lack of ventilation in Armavir prison reported by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). The Kosh and Hrazdan prisons (two of the country's largest penal facilities), had been closed for renovation in 2021 to bring the cells and administrative buildings into compliance with international standards. The prison service was able to outsource priority renovation and maintenance work. One cell had been adapted for use by prisoners with impaired mobility. Other renovation works had been completed in pretrial detention facilities and isolation units. A unit for pregnant women and mothers with children under the age of 3 years, equipped with hot water, toilets and a shower room had been brought into operation in 2024. Two entirely new buildings had been constructed in line with international standards, and a women's unit and education and training centre had been fully renovated. In four prisons, the rooms used for lengthy visits by inmates' relatives, including a special room for juveniles, had been fully refurbished. In three prisons, the rooms used for shorter visits had been refurbished. Work had been completed on the gym in Nubarashen prison.

55. Since 2020, all prison food services had been outsourced to a private company. That company provided meals prepared according to a pre-approved weekly menu that ensured that prisoners received a varied diet. Over 95 per cent of inmates were satisfied with the food they received, and none relied on family members for a sufficiently nutritious diet. Pregnant and breastfeeding women, juveniles and persons with health conditions received special meals that met their dietary requirements. Distribution of individually packaged hygiene items on a weekly basis had begun. The regulations stipulated that all inmates must be allowed at least one 15-minute shower a week.

56. Since 2019, all inmates under the age of 19 received instruction under the general school curriculum. In 2022, the provision of instruction had been expanded to include persons of all ages who had not completed their secondary education, and information on the benefits of an education was distributed. All inmates were informed of the opportunities for vocational training. Classrooms had been established in a number of prisons. Over 100 prisoners annually signed up for general secondary education courses.

57. Under the Ministry of Justice offender training programme, courses on computer skills, decorative and applied arts, business literacy, pottery, painting and technology were offered. With support from the Council of Europe, a woodworking workshop had opened in Sevan prison, where inmates made furniture for other penitentiary institutions. A similar workshop would be established in Artik prison.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*