



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### 115th session

#### Summary record of the 3141st meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 23 April 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Balcerzak

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Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention

*Combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Ukraine*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 3139th and 3140th meetings.

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention**

*Combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Ukraine  
(CERD/C/UKR/24-26; CERD/C/UKR/Q/24-26)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ukraine joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair**, welcoming the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the meeting, explained that the other members of the delegation would be participating via video link.
3. **A representative of Ukraine**, introducing his country's combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports (CERD/C/UKR/24-26), said that the report detailed the legislative and practical measures that had been taken to implement the Convention between 2014 and 2019. However, it should be noted that there had been a period of accelerated progress in the fields of racial discrimination, equality, the rights of national minorities and Indigenous Peoples, cultural diversity and hate speech following the creation of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience in 2019. The Service was the executive body tasked with overseeing the formulation and implementation of State policy in the fields of national minorities, inter-ethnic relations, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Its establishment had given powerful impetus to the Government's ongoing efforts to harmonize national legislation with European standards on ethnopolitical rights, human rights and religious rights. Significant progress had been made in those areas in recent years, despite the invasion by the Russian Federation in February 2022 and the subsequent war, which had had a powerful negative impact on efforts to ensure the rights, freedoms and interests of national minorities in Ukraine, especially in territories occupied by the Russian Federation.
4. Ukraine had been granted candidate status for membership in the European Union in June 2022. It had subsequently received seven recommendations in relation to its candidacy, one of which dealt with the completion of legislative reforms in the fields of national minorities and inter-ethnic relations. Significant steps had already been taken to implement that recommendation, including the adoption of the Act on National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine and 16 by-laws. The European Commission had published a positive report on the status of Ukrainian legislation in October 2024. The Government had held consultations with public organizations representing national minorities and was currently in the final stages of preparing a road map to bring Ukrainian legislation fully into line with European law, along with an action plan to ensure the rights of national minorities.
5. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Rapporteur) said that the State Party's most recent census had taken place as far back as 2001 and, in its report, the Government had not provided data on the demographic composition of the population, disaggregated by ethnic origin, or on migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless persons residing in the country. He therefore wished to know whether the Government had any plans to conduct a new census containing questions on self-identification and what measures it planned to take to collect data on the enjoyment of social and economic rights by the different groups under its jurisdiction.
6. He would like to know whether there were any plans to bring national legislation relating to the prohibition of racial discrimination fully into line with article 1 of the Convention by including national origin and descent as prohibited grounds for discrimination. It would also be useful to know what measures were being taken to amend that legislation to expressly prohibit intersecting forms of discrimination.
7. The Committee would welcome further information on the progress made under the 2015–2020 National Human Rights Strategy and the action plan for its implementation. It would also be interesting to hear whether a time frame had been set for formulating and adopting a strategy on combating racial discrimination.
8. The Committee would appreciate further information on the mandate and activities of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience. He would like to know what steps were taken by the Service to hold public consultations and ensure that groups vulnerable

to racial discrimination could participate in its work. It would also be helpful to know whether the Government had any plans to create a central mechanism tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of measures aiming at combating racial discrimination.

9. He would be grateful if the delegation could provide further information on all the measures that were being taken to review and amend Ukrainian legislation to ensure the prohibition of all forms of racial discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes on all the grounds established under article 1 of the Convention. It would also be useful to know whether the Government planned to review and amend the Criminal Code and, in particular, to remove the restrictive requirements that prevented the application of article 161. The delegation might also like to provide updated information on bill No. 5488, which had been brought before parliament in 2021. He would appreciate learning what the current status of the bill was, to what extent its provisions were aligned with articles 1 and 4 of the Convention and whether a time frame had been set for its adoption.

10. The Committee would welcome further information on the legislation that had been put in place to combat racial discrimination in political discourse. Details on the number of complaints received and investigations initiated, as well as on the sanctions handed down for such offences, would be of particular interest. He also wished to know to what extent the law on the media was aligned with article 4 of the Convention. It would be useful to learn what specific measures were taken to combat hate speech in the media and over the Internet, whether a designated entity had been set up to monitor such acts and whether victims had access to complaints mechanisms.

11. **A representative of Ukraine** said that, although a national census had been scheduled to take place in 2023, it had been cancelled following the Russian invasion in February 2022. Regrettably, for as long as his country remained under martial law, it would not be possible to conduct a census. A new census was indeed needed since, under national legislation, it was the Government's only opportunity to ask all citizens to indicate their ethnicity.

12. In general, Ukraine did not have a problem with discrimination or intolerance towards ethnic minorities. As was widely known, the current President of Ukraine was Jewish. Members of the Jewish community had also held the titles of Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Speaker of the Parliament, while the current Minister of Defence belonged to the Muslim community. Although his country faced certain challenges relating to the integration of the Roma community, the Government was working hard to resolve those issues and to protect the Roma culture and language.

13. The State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience had been created in 2019. The Service employed around 40 people and dealt with issues relating to national and ethnic minorities, discrimination, religious affairs, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Since entering into operation in 2020, it had prepared the Act on National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine, which had been adopted by parliament in 2022, and two subsequent amendments to that law in response to recommendations of the European Commission for Democracy through Law. The Act set out the responsibilities and duties of the Service in relation to minority groups in Ukraine and laid down plans for the development of further legislation. Any ethnic group with a presence in Ukraine was considered to be a national minority under the Act. The term "communities" had been added to the title of the legislation at the request of certain groups that did not wish to be referred to as minorities. According to the results of the census of 2001, there were approximately 130 national minority groups in the country; responding to the needs of each of those groups therefore represented a considerable challenge for the Government.

14. The Office of the Ombudsperson, also known as the Commissioner for Human Rights, monitored the activities of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, particularly in the areas of national minorities, discrimination and Roma issues. The Ombudsperson issued an annual report and made recommendations to State and regional institutions and authorities. The screening of legislation undertaken as part of negotiations on European Union membership had identified gaps in the provisions relating to hate speech and hate crimes, particularly in terms of definitions, and a range of public bodies, including the Ministry of Justice and the Prosecutor General's Office, were working to address them. An inter-agency working group on discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes was focusing

on aligning domestic legislation with the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights).

15. **Ms. Chung** (Country Task Force) said that it would be useful to have more information on the inter-agency working group on discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes. Clarification would be appreciated as to whether the Commissioner for Human Rights was a parliamentary position, and she would welcome details of the structure and work of the national human rights institution, as well as on its degree of independence from the Government.

16. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that the Committee strongly encouraged the State party to continue its work to combat hate speech.

17. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that she would welcome statistics demonstrating the effectiveness of the work of the Expert Council on Ethnic Affairs in protecting minority rights. She also wished to know to what extent national minorities participated in public discussions on governmental decisions affecting them and whether those discussions had led to improvements in their situations.

18. **Mr. Amir**, stressing that eradicating hate would help bring an end to war, said that the point was to find a way to put hatred aside, while recognizing that taking away a people's land was tantamount to taking away everything. A way had to be found to promote diplomacy and understanding, to come together without undermining the people's rights. At some point, the killing and the senseless war must stop.

19. **Ms. Tlakula** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that, in its previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/UKR/CO/22-23](#)), the Committee had requested the State Party to provide it with information on the implementation of its recommendation on the application of article 161 of the Criminal Code concerning hate crimes. Although the State Party had responded to that request within one year, it had failed to provide the necessary information on measures taken to remove requirements that prevented the application of that article. The Committee had subsequently requested the State Party to include information on the necessary legislative amendments in its next periodic report. Unfortunately, the periodic report did not include that information, and the Committee therefore wished to invite the delegation to share that information during the present dialogue.

20. **A representative of Ukraine** said that the war in Ukraine was an existential one for the Ukrainian nation. The Russian dictator had recently stated that there was no such thing as a Ukrainian; to him, Ukrainians were simply "bad Russians" who needed to be re-educated to become "good Russians". Yet the Ukrainian nation predated the founding of Russia as a State.

21. If Ukraine were to stop fighting, the Russians would simply kill all Ukrainians who resisted them. They had documentary plans for what they intended to do. They would divide the Ukrainian population into two groups. They would kill all those who would continue to fight for the existence of their nation and would re-educate the rest, the younger ones. That was why they were deporting tens of thousands of Ukrainian children to Russian territory. It would be very easy to stop the war. All that would be needed would be for the Russian dictator to order his forces to withdraw from Ukrainian territory.

22. The Human Rights Commissioner was indeed a parliamentary commissioner who functioned as an ombudsperson. The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights had departments dealing with various aspects of human rights, including a department that dealt with national minorities and discrimination. The inter-agency working group was striving to fill the gaps in domestic legislation, particularly with regard to definitions, and a number of laws and by-laws had been adopted in that regard. The State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience was also working in consultation with national minorities to draft new legislation and establish a legal framework for the implementation of international instruments. Several national minority councils had been established, including a council of leaders of national minority institutions, which discussed legislative and other matters.

23. Following the adoption of the amendments to the Act on National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine, and despite the challenges posed by the displacement of millions

of people by the war, some 60 online and offline consultations had been held with representatives of different national minorities. Prior to the war, prejudice against the Roma people had been widespread, as elsewhere in Europe, but with many members of the Roma community serving in the Ukrainian army, societal attitudes had changed and bias had diminished.

24. At the level of the State, the progressive implementation of the Strategy for Promoting the Realization of the Rights and Opportunities of Persons belonging to the Roma National Minority in Ukrainian Society for the period up to 2030 (the Roma Strategy) had also helped reduce prejudice and discrimination. Annual round tables and conferences were convened to discuss the state of the Roma community, and a study was currently being conducted to obtain data on the number of Roma living in Ukraine and the main challenges they faced in the current times of heightened vulnerability as a result of the war.

25. The State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience was mainly responsible for developing legislation, by-laws and associated legal instruments, in consultation with the minorities concerned. Several two-day forums had been convened in 2024 to discuss issues affecting minority groups and identify opportunities for joint action. The Greek national minority had been particularly affected by the war, and many of its members had been displaced. Steps had been taken to include two of the languages spoken by the Greek minority in the list of endangered languages and to preserve the language of the Crimean Tatars. A National Commission on the Crimean Tatar Language had been set up to implement the Strategy for the Development of the Crimean Tatar Language for 2022–2032. Work on a new orthography for the Crimean Tatar language had been concluded in early 2025.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.25. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.*

26. **Ms. Chung** said that it would be useful to find out about measures taken to prevent racial profiling and racially motivated violence by the police and other law enforcement personnel. She would be grateful for information on reported cases of violence and profiling of that type and on the measures taken in response and on the steps taken to strengthen law enforcement mechanisms to combat racial discrimination. The delegation might kindly describe the measures taken to raise public awareness, counter incitement to hatred and hate crimes, train law enforcement officers accordingly and ensure accountability for acts of discriminatory violence. Statistics on the number of complaints, investigations and convictions of police officers for having committed discriminatory violence would also be appreciated.

27. The Committee would be grateful for statistical data on the number of complaints of racial discrimination, racist hate speech and discriminatory statements in public discourse and the media that had been filed over the previous five years; the number of investigations, proceedings and convictions; the nature of the sanctions imposed; and any reparations afforded to the victims. She was particularly interested to know how many complaints had been filed with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights and to learn more about the Office of the Commissioner's status in terms of its operational and financial independence. She wondered what had been done to remove barriers to reporting and to improve data collection on racial discrimination and hate speech. It would be interesting to find out how the armed conflict had affected the number of complaints lodged, the nature of the reported incidents and the outcome of the corresponding proceedings.

28. She would appreciate it if the delegation could describe the measures taken to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement personnel to investigate and prosecute complaints of racial discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes and to raise awareness around victims' rights, along with the efforts made to ensure safe and effective reporting. While it was encouraging to hear that the amended law on free legal aid granted victims of hate crimes the right to secondary legal aid, she wondered why no legal aid was made available at the complaint stage and why the entry into force of the amendment had been postponed until a year after martial law was lifted.

29. She was curious to hear the delegation's views on the results of recent surveys according to which only 88 per cent of the respondents and only 57 per cent of the police officers who had been surveyed believed that human rights were universally applicable

irrespective of race, nationality or other characteristics. In that connection, she wondered how the State Party went about promoting human rights education at different levels of the education system and what measures had been taken to raise awareness of the importance of cultural diversity, tolerance and inter-ethnic understanding among civil servants, law enforcement personnel and the general public.

30. The Committee had received contradictory information on the number of Roma persons living in the State Party and would appreciate it if the delegation could provide accurate data. It would also be helpful to learn about the results of any surveys on discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping regarding Roma conducted by the State Party itself. She would be grateful if the delegation could explain why the perpetrators of the 2018 attacks against Roma settlements, although identified, had not been brought to justice. Additional information was needed on Roma education, steps taken to improve the material conditions in Roma schools and to tackle high drop-out rates and the availability of mother tongue education for Roma children. Additional details on measures taken to prevent statelessness among undocumented Roma individuals, improve birth registration rates and remove language and other barriers to civil registration would also be appreciated.

31. She would be grateful to receive information on the outcome of the efforts undertaken to implement the Roma Strategy and the programme entitled “Partnership for all: developing strategies for socio-economic cooperation between Roma communities and local authorities in Ukraine”. She wondered whether the delegation could specify what human and financial resources had been allocated; indicate the extent to which Roma representatives had been involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of that strategy and programme; and explain the reasons for the reported shortfall in funding.

32. **A representative of Ukraine** said that officers of the national police force received extensive training, both internally and in cooperation with different ministries and international partner organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), among others. Those training programmes included modules on combating discrimination. As part of the implementation of a programme entitled “Unity in Diversity” for the period up to 2034, government officials and the police were being trained in diversity-related matters. Anti-discrimination training for police officers was also an integral part of the work being undertaken by the country in cooperation with the European Union with a view to its accession.

33. In order to address the situation of undocumented Roma individuals, outreach activities had been conducted in the context of a pilot project rolled out in cooperation with the Council of Europe from 2023 onward. Several visits had been organized to regions with large Roma populations in the course of which thousands of Roma had been issued identity documentation. At the same time, the State Migration Service had simplified procedures in order to reduce access barriers.

34. Roma representatives had participated in the consultations on the amendments to the legislation on the rights of national minorities (communities) and the respective by-laws. An inter-agency working group comprising high-level officials from 15 ministries, the deputy head of the State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience and five Roma leaders met regularly to discuss issues pertaining to the implementation of the Roma Strategy, among other matters.

35. On 8 April 2025, a high-level event attended by representatives of States and international bodies and the OECD High Commissioner on National Minorities had been organized in Kyiv to commemorate International Roma Day. Smaller events organized across the regions had been attended by a predominantly Roma audience.

36. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she recognized that the State Party had been active in the area of human rights in recent years, including in the framework of initiatives undertaken with other international and regional organizations; however, specific information on implementation of the Committee’s recommendations was lacking. For example, with regard to the integration of Roma communities, it was important for the Committee to know more about the exact nature of the consultations that had been held, their purpose, the stakeholders that had been invited to participate, how the participants had been chosen and whether they reflected the composition of the communities being consulted.

37. She had been interested to hear that prejudice towards Roma people had greatly diminished because many of them had served in the Ukrainian army. It was important that Ukrainian society should sustain the unity that had been achieved during the war, ensuring that divisive stereotypes did not re-emerge once it came to an end.

38. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he would like to know more about the complaint mechanisms available to victims of hate crimes. Given that hate crimes might be committed by police officers, he wondered what mechanisms – other than those implemented by the police – existed and whether such mechanisms were user-friendly.

39. **Ms. Shepherd**, noting that ignorance was often at the root of intolerance, said that she wished to know whether the State Party provided the kind of education that allowed children of all ages to learn about difference and tolerance as a means of contributing to social harmony and to the prevention of hate crimes, racism and racial discrimination. She would also be interested to know whether the State Party was taking sufficient account of the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 on preventing and combating racial profiling by law enforcement officials.

40. It would be useful to learn how many people of African descent lived in Ukraine. In view of the fact that people of African descent around the world experienced all kinds of discriminatory behaviours, attitudes and actions, and that even societies with few people of African descent benefited from education and programmes that promoted tolerance, she wished to know whether the Government supported and recognized the relevance of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent, which had been proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

41. **Mr. Guissé** said that he would be interested to know whether the State Party's efforts to amend its legislation on hate speech reflected its desire to join the European Union or a more general commitment to fulfilling its international treaty obligations. As efforts to combat hate speech might eventually be undermined if they were too closely associated with a protracted European Union accession process, the delegation might explain how the Government ensured that its reform agenda was underpinned by international standards more broadly.

42. **Mr. Amir** said that he would like to know what steps had been taken to raise awareness of the current review and whether the Committee's concluding observations would be disseminated in the Ukrainian media. He would also be interested to know what had been done to disseminate information on the country's cultural life in the Ukrainian and, in particular, the Western media, given the latter's narrow focus on the war.

43. **A representative of Ukraine** said that cultural life and community development in Ukraine had not stopped because of the war. The State Service for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience regularly published news articles on its website about activities and events, including those involving national minorities and Roma communities, as it was important to ensure that other public institutions and community organizations were familiar with its activities. However, under circumstances in which many cities had been destroyed and many people were suffering, the Government tended to organize events such as forums and discussions, rather than events of a celebratory nature. With the Committee's permission, it might also publish information about the current review.

44. The National Police were usually responsible for receiving complaints of hate crimes. In Ukraine, all citizens had equal constitutional rights and were equal before the law, and therefore the police were required to protect all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, culture or religion. The activities of the police were monitored by various institutions, notably the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights – a large institution which had over 500 staff and different departments that worked on issues such as national minorities and discrimination.

45. Education on tolerance, non-discrimination and related subjects was provided as part of the regular curriculum and through special programmes. All Ukrainian schools, except those that taught in the languages of national minorities, were open for any child to attend, and they treated their students equally. Schoolchildren themselves were unconcerned about the ethnicity of their classmates. It should be noted that the Ukrainian authorities had

discontinued the Soviet-era practice of identifying a person's ethnicity on his or her passport. Government officials were only permitted to request information on ethnicity when conducting the population census, and respondents were not required to provide that information.

46. Ukraine had a small Afrodescendent community that was mostly composed of people who had come to Ukraine to study during the Soviet period and who had remained in the country, started families and become Ukrainian citizens. The Government regularly consulted representatives of that community and was not aware of any problems in its relations with the general population.

47. The Government had set up an inter-institutional working group to draft new legislation on hate speech in order to meet internal needs, fill legislative gaps and implement recommendations from the European Commission. The delegation would provide the Committee with detailed information on the working group's recent activities in due course.

48. **A representative of Ukraine** said that the legal aid system provided primary and secondary legal aid and access to alternative dispute resolution procedures. The Legal Assistance Coordination Centre regularly conducted targeted information campaigns to raise public awareness about human rights and the right to legal aid, promote the legal empowerment of vulnerable groups, especially national minorities, and strengthen public trust in the legal aid system.

49. Despite efforts to teach people how to protect their rights, the Coordination Centre had received only 91 requests for legal aid in discrimination cases – 78 for primary and 13 for secondary legal aid – during the previous three years. Most of those cases had concerned violations of labour laws; one had related to alleged discrimination on the basis of nationality by a judge.

50. The Government recognized the importance of identifying and reporting discrimination cases. Victims of discrimination could submit complaints through various channels, including by attending one of the country's 500 legal aid centres, calling a hotline or visiting an online platform. Information on legal aid was increasingly available, and activities had been undertaken with the participation of the Roma community. For example, an artificial intelligence platform had been used to facilitate legal consultations in the Romani language.

51. **A representative of Ukraine** said that, in June 2024, the Government had adopted a list of languages of national minorities that were threatened with extinction. Subsequently, it had set up a working group of national and international academics and experts who were familiar with those languages. As Romani had many dialects with no common standard form, the working group had established a subgroup tasked with working on the codification of Romani as it was spoken in Ukraine, following the example of a similar initiative in Slovakia. Once a standard written language had been codified, it would be possible to teach Romani in schools.

52. **The Chair** said that, with regard to the dissemination of information in the media, he wished to remind the delegation that the current meeting was public and was being broadcast on United Nations Web TV. A video recording of the meeting would also be made available online. The State Party was encouraged to use those resources to enhance the visibility of its dialogue with the Committee and was free to publish related information or links on government websites.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*