



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

116th session

Summary record (partial)* of the 3181st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 26 November 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

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Combined twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Tunisia

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The discussion covered in the summary record began at 4.05 p.m.

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

*Combined twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Tunisia
(CERD/C/TUN/20-22; CERD/C/TUN/Q/20-22; CERD/C/TUN/QPR/20-22)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Tunisia joined the meeting via video link.*
2. **A representative of Tunisia**, introducing his country's combined twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports (CERD/C/TUN/20-22), said that the report was the result of a broad consultative and participatory process undertaken by the National Commission for the Coordination, Preparation and Submission of Reports and Follow-up to Recommendations on Human Rights in collaboration with several government agencies, independent national bodies, civil society organizations and stakeholders. For the first time, groups of children, adolescents and young people had been consulted, and that practice was now being mainstreamed in the preparation of other reports to the treaty bodies.
3. Combating racism and xenophobia was a prerequisite for building a democratic society. Tunisia was therefore committed to enshrining the principles of equality and non-discrimination in its legislative system and adhering to them when formulating policies and developing related programmes and action plans. The State was committed to protecting all residents within its territory against racial discrimination within the framework of the rule of law and in accordance with its national laws and international obligations.
4. Tunisia was proud to have been the first country to officially abolish slavery and servitude, which it had done by decree in 1846. The documentation relating to the abolition of slavery in Tunisia had been preserved through the Memory of the World Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Tunisia had been among the first countries to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, having done so in January 1967. Since then, Tunisia had been actively engaged in all international and regional normative frameworks that enshrined the principles of equality and non-discrimination in all their forms. Several important laws had been enacted to provide guarantees for the protection of the rights of all victims of discrimination or segregation within the meaning of the Convention, most notably the Organic Act on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 2018, a pioneering law that had made racial discrimination an offence punishable by law and facilitated access to justice for victims of discrimination. The provisions of the Organic Act had been enforced by the courts since its enactment. Article 23 of the Constitution of 2022 provided that all citizens had equal rights and duties and were equal before the law, without any discrimination.
5. In recent years, Tunisia had faced an unprecedented influx of migrants in an irregular situation. Despite the security, economic and social challenges that the situation posed, the State had mobilized all its resources to take care of those migrants, who were treated as vulnerable groups and victims of an unjust global system and of criminal networks that trafficked in human beings for illicit gain. In 2011, against a complex regional and security backdrop, the Tunisian Government and people had shown extraordinary solidarity by welcoming around 1.2 million people from Libya, a number equivalent to one tenth of the population of Tunisia. Before that, Tunisia had been welcoming migrants from sub-Saharan Africa for decades, whether for study, work or medical treatment, and they enjoyed all the rights and services to which they were entitled by law. Migrants from other parts of Africa were welcome as long as their entry was compliant with the internationally recognized legal framework. While the Government was committed to protecting foreign residents of all nationalities, it was determined to tackle irregular migration within the framework of national legislation and its international obligations. In that context, African migrants in an irregular situation were dealt with in the framework of the voluntary return programme, which sought to ensure that they were returned to their countries of origin safely and in a manner that preserved human dignity. Such returns were carried out in coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Tunisia had always called for greater international

solidarity in combating irregular migration, which was a shared responsibility. In that regard, at the initiative of the President, an international conference had been held in Rome in July 2023, bringing together the countries of the Mediterranean basin and sub-Saharan Africa with a view to adopting a multidimensional approach to addressing the root causes of migration and its repercussions.

6. Tunisian law guaranteed the political rights of Tunisian citizens without discrimination and also provided for freedom of assembly and association for black citizens, minorities, immigrants and refugees. Associations of various kinds, including Amazigh associations, participated in regional and national consultations organized in the field of human rights, including in areas related to combating racial discrimination, such as the consultations conducted for the preparation of periodic reports to the treaty bodies.

7. The Government strived to guarantee economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to education, health and housing, without discrimination. It provided foreign students, particularly those from sub-Saharan Africa, with places at and scholarships to Tunisian public universities and provided healthcare services to foreign nationals and migrants, including those in an irregular situation, at public health facilities. The Government was committed to protecting the rights of migrant workers and combating forced labour, child labour and trafficking in persons. A new law adopted in 2025 on the regulation of employment contracts and the prevention of subcontracting protected workers from economic exploitation and precarious work. The Government's approach went beyond the definition of racial discrimination enshrined in article 1 of the Convention to include combating discrimination in all areas in order to guarantee human dignity, promote social justice and protect vulnerable groups.

8. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Rapporteur), recalling the Committee's recommendation in its previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/TUN/CO/19](#)) concerning the provision of an estimate of the ethnic composition of the Tunisian population in subsequent reports, said that the Committee would appreciate such data, in particular on the Amazigh, the black Tunisian population and non-citizens such as asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and migrants. It would also welcome information on the socioeconomic situation of those groups and the impact of measures taken to improve their situation. The Committee would also be interested to hear about the use of self-identification and anonymization of data in the census. It wished to know whether the State Party intended to take legislative or other measures to recognize the status of the Amazigh people and protect their collective rights in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. While the revocation of the circular imposing restrictions on parents' choice of names for newborn babies when registering their birth was a welcome development, according to reports received by the Committee the authorities in some regions and municipalities still refused to register Amazigh names. The Committee would therefore welcome information on the implementation of the new rules, including the work of the departments tasked with monitoring compliance, and on the mechanisms available for reporting non-compliance. It would also be interesting to hear more about how the study of Amazigh culture would be promoted in educational institutions, whether Tamazight, the Amazigh language, would be taught in schools in areas predominantly inhabited by the Amazigh, and what measures were being taken to ensure that members of the Amazigh ethnic group had access to quality education in their mother tongue. It would also be helpful to know whether, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations, measures had been taken to allow the use of Tamazight in dealings with the administrative and judicial authorities and to broadcast programmes in Tamazight on State media.

9. In view of reports that black Tunisians – some of whom traced their roots to Indigenous Saharan communities in the south of the country while others were descendants of migrants from neighbouring countries or of people brought from sub-Saharan Africa as slaves – experienced systemic discrimination and a range of socioeconomic disadvantages, including extreme poverty, the Committee would like to know what measures were being taken to combat racial discrimination against black Tunisians and improve their situation. In particular, it would appreciate information on any measures taken to combat persistent social stigma linked to slavery, eliminate offensive racial language, ensure equal representation in the media and public life, improve access to education and employment, and ensure

accountability in cases of workplace discrimination. It would also be interested to hear about any actions planned by the State Party to raise awareness, eradicate discriminatory practices and correct historical inequalities.

10. The delegation might comment on the participation of the Amazigh in political and public affairs, particularly in the light of reports that there were currently no Amazigh representatives in the Assembly of People's Representatives and there had been none in the National Constituent Assembly, which had promulgated the 2014 Constitution.

The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.

11. **A representative of Tunisia**, responding to the question on the ethnic composition of the population, said that the census and social surveys collected information on variables including sex, age, marital status and disability, but did not collect information on ethnicity or religious affiliation. The census covered all persons in Tunisia who met the definition of "residents", namely those who had been residing in the country for six consecutive months or more or intended to reside there for at least six months. The census also collected information on the socioeconomic situation of immigrants. For example, the unemployment rate among immigrants was 9.6 per cent, compared to an overall unemployment rate of 17.2 per cent. A set of economic and social indicators related to immigrants and foreign nationals was available on the website of the National Institute of Statistics.

12. **A representative of Tunisia** said that, according to the most recent figures from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from October 2025, there were 7,812 refugees and asylum-seekers in Tunisia. Of that group, 70 per cent were asylum-seekers and 30 per cent refugees; 81 per cent were male and 19 per cent female. Sudanese nationals made up about 50 per cent of all those registered with UNHCR, followed by nationals of Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Cameroon, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Children made up 17 per cent of the total number and 5 per cent of them were unaccompanied. A total of 140 minors were being accommodated in temporary facilities supported by UNHCR. Among the persons registered, 374 had disabilities or special needs. In terms of educational and occupational background, 15 per cent had university or vocational training certificates, 23 per cent had completed secondary education, and 42 per cent had work experience, particularly in manual labour, traditional industries, services and trade.

13. **A representative of Tunisia** said that the Government attached great importance to the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as established in the Constitution, and incorporated them into its legislation and public policies and programmes. It was committed to combating discrimination on the basis of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or religion. National identity was based on equality, with no racial, tribal or ethnic discrimination. Human rights education was part of the curricula in the national education system, with a focus on promoting the values of citizenship, tolerance and respect for diversity within educational institutions. In accordance with article 44 of the Constitution, the State guaranteed free public education at all levels and sought to ensure that younger generations remained rooted in their Arab and Islamic identity and sense of national belonging; it also worked to consolidate the Arabic language, promoting and encouraging its widespread use, as well as encouraging openness to foreign languages and civilizations. Education was compulsory until the age of 16, without discrimination on the basis of gender, social origin, region, colour or religion. The State was proud of the cultural and civilizational heritage of all components of Tunisian society, which it considered a source of richness and unity.

14. **A representative of Tunisia** said that, as part of the State's efforts in the field of human rights, steps were taken to protect ethnic and racial minorities by having their customs, traditions and cultural practices registered by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. In accordance with article 49 of the Constitution, the right to culture was guaranteed, without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religion, and the State encouraged cultural creativity and supported national culture in all its diversity with a view to promoting the values of tolerance, rejection of violence and openness to different cultures. The Government's approach was in line with the relevant international instruments ratified by Tunisia, including the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. One of the recent results of that approach had been the inclusion, in 2024, of performing arts among the Twāyef of Ghbonten, a dark-skinned Tunisian community descended from slaves, in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, in recognition of the unique and valuable historical, cultural and artistic characteristics of those folk arts, which combined poetry, singing and dancing with multiple influences dating back to the nineteenth century following the abolition of slavery in Tunisia.

15. The State, through the Ministry of Culture and its affiliated institutions, supported a range of cultural events aimed at preserving the collective memory of Amazigh villages and safeguarding their tangible and intangible heritage, thereby ensuring the continuity of Amazigh cultural identity. Activities had been organized to highlight various elements of the Amazigh intangible heritage, such as music, dance, crafts, culinary arts and other traditional knowledge. Initiatives that focused on documenting local heritage and passing it on to future generations were encouraged, as was the participation of local people in expressing their collective memory and cultural identity. The Ministry provided funding to a number of Amazigh cultural associations in the provinces of Gabès and Medenine.

16. **Mr. Guissé** said that he would appreciate a response to his question on the steps being taken to implement the new rules on the registration of children with Amazigh names. He would also welcome more specific details on the ethnic composition of the population and on the participation of the Amazigh and black Tunisians in political and public life.

17. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** (Country Task Force) said that she would be interested to hear the delegation's response to reports that the Baha'i faith remained unrecognized and that its practice was forbidden, thus forcing the Baha'i community to operate informally and largely online.

18. **Mr. Rayess** said that he would appreciate an explanation as to why the State Party had not sent a delegation to participate in the dialogue with the Committee in person. The absence of a delegation physically present in the meeting room was all the more regrettable given the technical difficulties that had delayed and disrupted the meeting.

19. With regard to the Committee's questions on the ethnic composition of the country, he understood that Tunisia, like his own country, Mauritania, had strived to bring together diverse groups to build a cohesive nation of equal citizens and had sought to move beyond tribal, ethnic or regional lines. In that context, the collection of statistics disaggregated by ethnic group might be regarded as problematic and even as a step backwards. It must also be acknowledged that the arrival of large numbers of irregular migrants from neighbouring African countries posed significant challenges for the countries of the Maghreb.

20. **Ms. Tlakula** (Follow-up Rapporteur), recalling that the recommendation, in the Committee's previous concluding observations, concerning the registration of Amazigh organizations had been one of the recommendations selected for follow-up within one year, said that, as no response had been provided in that respect, she would be interested to know what progress had been made in ensuring that Amazigh organizations could now be registered. With reference to paragraphs 132 and 133 of the State Party report, she would also welcome clarification of who was considered to belong to the "black population".

21. **Mr. Diaby** said that the Committee had received reports that a speech by the President on 21 February 2023, in which he had referred to migrants as "hordes of illegal immigrants", accused them of committing crimes and referred to the "great replacement" theory, had incited an unprecedented wave of racist violence, including physical assaults in the streets, evictions, police raids and massive online hate campaigns. He wished to know whether the 300 migrants arrested in that context had been provided with access to lawyers and the services of interpreters during their hearings and whether any convictions had been handed down.

22. **A representative of Tunisia**, responding to the question on measures taken to ensure that Amazigh names were recorded on birth certificates, said that all births within the national territory were recorded in the civil registry in accordance with Act No. 57-3 of 1957 regulating civil status. Circular No. 85 of 2 December 1965, which had contained certain restrictions on the registration of births, had been replaced by Circular No. 3 of 1 July 2020,

which ensured that parents had the freedom to choose the names of their children without restriction. All municipalities were required to strictly comply with the provisions of the new circular.

23. **A representative of Tunisia** said that no distinction was made between citizens of Tunisia, whatever their race or origin. Tunisia was proud to be part of the African continent. Tunisia was open to people of all races and ethnicities, as well as to people of different religions, despite the perception in some quarters that it was only open to Muslims. Tribal society had disappeared in Tunisia, and all tribes had merged within the Tunisian nation, which was Arab, Islamic, African and Mediterranean. Tunisia welcomed many students from sub-Saharan Africa. Efforts were being made at all levels to ensure that there was no segregation, division, racism or discrimination in the country, in respect of either citizens or foreign nationals. In addition to the development of the legislative framework, training and awareness-raising efforts were being pursued, although such work took time.

24. The Baha'is in Tunisia were treated with utmost respect and participated actively in all spheres of society.

25. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would be interested to know what distinction was made between black Tunisians and black migrants from other African countries. She would also like to hear more about the efforts being made to change attitudes and the kinds of problems that needed to be addressed in that regard.

26. **Mr. Guissé** said that, although black Tunisians and black migrants of various nationalities fell into two different categories, they both experienced discrimination based on their skin colour.

27. **The Chair** said that, given the difficulties experienced in connecting to the delegation in Tunisia during the current meeting, it might not be possible to cover all of the issues planned for discussion during the second part of the dialogue.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.