



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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## Human Rights Committee

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

1. The Committee considered the fifth periodic report of Cyprus<sup>1</sup> at its 3999th and 4000th meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 28 and 30 June 2023. At its 4028th meeting, held on 20 July 2023, it adopted the present concluding observations.

#### A. Introduction

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

#### B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the adoption by the State party of the following legislative measures:

(a) The Criminal Code (Amendment) Law (No. 87(I)/2015), by which public incitement to violence or hatred against a group of persons or a member of such a group on the basis of their sexual orientation or their gender identity constitutes a criminal offence;

(b) The Criminal Code (Amendment) Law (No. 31(I)/2017), which provides that the court, at the sentencing stage, may take into account as an aggravating factor the motivation of prejudice against a group of persons or a member of such a group of persons on the basis of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religion or other belief, descent, sexual orientation or gender identity;

(c) The Rights of Arrested Persons and Detainees (Amendment) Law (No. 22(I)/2017) (amending Law No. 163(I)/2005), which provides for the right to information, the right of access to a lawyer, the right to have a third party informed upon deprivation of liberty and the right to communicate with third persons and with consular authorities while deprived of liberty;

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its 138th session (26 June–26 July 2023).

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

<sup>2</sup> See [CCPR/C/SR.3999](#) and [CCPR/C/SR.4000](#).

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



(d) The Rights of Arrested Persons and Detainees (Amendment) Law (No. 111(I)/2018) (amending Law No. 163(I)/2005), which strengthens certain aspects of the presumption of innocence and of the right to be present at the trial in criminal proceedings;

(e) The Rights of Suspects, Arrested Persons and Detainees (Amendment) Law (No. 71(I)/2019) (amending Law No. 163(I)/2005), which provides for legal aid for suspects and accused persons;

(f) The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) (Amendment) Law (No. 95(I)/2019) (amending Law No. 119(I)2000), which provides that the court may decide on a location other than the courtroom for a child victim to give testimony;

(g) The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in and Exploitation of Persons and Protection of Victims (Amendment) Law (No. 117 (I)/2019) (amending Law No. 60(I)/2014), which criminalizes trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation and increases the prescribed penalties from up to 10 years' to 25 years' imprisonment for offences involving an adult victim;

(h) The Combating of Sexism and Online Sexism Law (No. 209(I)/2020), which criminalizes sexism in all its forms in both the public and the private spheres;

(i) The Radio and Television Broadcasters (Amendment) Law (No. 197(I)/2021) (amending Law No. 7(I)/1998), which brings the legislation into compliance with Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 (the Audiovisual Media Services Directive);

(j) The Protection from Harassment and Stalking Law (No. 114(I)/2021);

(k) The Holistic Sexual Education Act (No. 205(I)/2022);

(l) The Criminal Code (Amendment) Law (No. 39(I)/2023), which bans conversion practices and criminalizes any form of conversion therapies aimed at changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

4. The Committee also welcomes the ratification by the State party of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, on 11 September 2017.

## C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

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

5. The Committee welcomes the adoption in 2021 of the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, and the establishment of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Justice and Public Order in 2019, which is mandated to monitor the human rights situation in the State party and the implementation of its international obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights guaranteed. It is concerned, however, about the infrequent application of the Covenant by the domestic courts system and the low level of public awareness of the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant and of the ability for individuals to submit claims of violations of their rights under the Covenant to the Committee (art. 2).

**6. The Committee encourages the State party to take appropriate measures to educate the general public about the first Optional Protocol and the mechanisms in place to submit individual complaints of violations of the Covenant to the Committee. The State party should put in place effective procedures, accessible in Greek, Turkish and the minority languages, to assist complainants in pursuing recourse for violations of their rights under the first Optional Protocol. In addition, the State party should strengthen awareness of the Covenant among lawyers, prosecutors and judges to help ensure that its provisions are, where possible, invoked before and applied by the national courts.**

### National human rights institution

7. The Committee welcomes the A status reaccreditation, in 2022, of the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. Nevertheless, it remains concerned about the lack of Turkish-speaking staff, and about the reported need for adequate funding and for increased formal cooperation with civil society (art. 2).

**8. The State party should continue its efforts, including by implementing the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, to ensure that the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights fully complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and is able to carry out its mandate effectively and independently, including by ensuring that it has the human, financial and technical resources necessary to perform its tasks effectively. In that regard, the Committee encourages the State party to take measures to ensure the presence and participation of Turkish-speaking personnel.**

### Non-discrimination, hate speech and hate crime

9. The Committee welcomes the legislative and institutional steps made by the State party to combat and raise awareness of discrimination and hate crimes against vulnerable groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Turkish Cypriots and Roma communities, and notes with appreciation the creation in 2021 of an inter-agency working group on hate crimes in Cyprus. However, the Committee is concerned by recent incidents of violence and discrimination against members of racial and ethnic minorities and against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, especially in rural areas (arts. 2, 18–20 and 26).

**10. The State party should intensify its efforts to combat hate speech and incitement to discrimination or violence on the grounds of, inter alia, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, with particular attention given to rural areas, in accordance with articles 19 and 20 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. The State party should, inter alia:**

(a) **Promptly elaborate and adopt the proposed national action plan to combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity and religion, ensuring effective consultation of civil society;**

(b) **Take effective measures to prevent and sanction both online and offline hate speech, and improve the collection of disaggregated data on discrimination, hate speech and hate crime;**

(c) **Strengthen awareness-raising efforts aimed at promoting respect for human rights and for diversity, and at eradicating prejudices on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity;**

(d) **Encourage the reporting of hate crimes and ensure that such crimes are promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished, and that victims receive full reparation;**

(e) **Reinforce cooperation among the relevant stakeholders, including civil society, and provide adequate training to national and local authorities, law enforcement officials, judges and prosecutors and to media workers on addressing hate speech and hate crimes and on promoting the principles of equality and diversity.**

### Discrimination on the basis of nationality

11. Referring to its previous concluding observations,<sup>4</sup> the Committee remains concerned that applications for citizenship continue to be denied or significantly delayed, in particular applications from individuals who have protected status under the Convention relating to the

<sup>4</sup> CCPR/C/CYP/CO/4, para. 6.

Status of Refugees and those from the children of Turkish Cypriots who were born and reside in the northern part of the country. Additionally, it is concerned by reports that naturalization procedures lack transparency and are applied arbitrarily, resulting, for example, in the denial of applications from individuals who have previously received State benefits, such as persons with disabilities and survivors of torture or trafficking (arts. 2 and 26).

12. **In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>5</sup> the State party should increase measures to ensure that the nationality laws are applied without discrimination on the basis of clearly defined legal criteria. It should ensure that naturalization procedures are transparent and that applicants have access to information concerning the requirements for citizenship and that they receive a decision on their application for citizenship within a reasonable period of time.**

#### **Gender equality**

13. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women (2019–2023) and notes the measures taken by the State party to increase the representation of women in political life and promote gender equality in the workforce and the peace process. However, the Committee remains concerned about the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, including in senior positions in the public and private sectors, and about the high rate of unemployment among women compared to men. While noting the decrease in the gender pay gap in recent years and the proposal to adopt legislation promoting pay transparency, the Committee is concerned about the continuing wage discrepancy between men and women (arts. 2, 3, 25 and 26).

14. **The State party should intensify its efforts to promote equality between men and women in all spheres of society and life, in particular by taking tangible steps to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions at all levels in the public and private sectors. It should consider adopting a statutory quota and a gender parity system for nominations to government bodies to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions at all levels of the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The State party should also take further steps to eliminate the obstacles in law and in practice preventing women from pursuing or being elected to public positions, including by encouraging gender parity in electoral lists by political parties. It should redouble its efforts to close the wage gap between men and women and reduce the unemployment rate of women.**

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

15. The Committee welcomes the various measures taken by the State party to address violence against women, including the adoption of the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Matters (No. 115(I)/2021) and the subsequent amendment (Law No. 117(I)/2022) to introduce the crime of femicide as a separate, specific offence. It also commends the State party for the establishment of the national coordinating body for preventing and combating violence against women, which prepared the first National Strategy and National Action Plan (2023–2028) on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2023. However, the Committee is concerned that cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, are still underreported, especially among ethnic minorities and foreign nationals, and that the prosecution and conviction rates for domestic violence remain low (arts. 2, 3, 7 and 23).

16. **The State party should continue its efforts to curb gender-based violence, in particular by taking all the measures necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the new National Strategy and National Action Plan (2023–2028) on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women. It should also:**

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., para. 6.

(a) **Step up action to systematically inform women of their rights and the avenues available for reporting violence and obtaining protection, assistance and redress, particularly women belonging to ethnic minorities and foreign nationals;**

(b) **Continue its efforts to provide training on women's rights and gender-based violence to all relevant stakeholders, and consider implementing mandatory training programmes for, in particular, national and local authorities, law enforcement officials, judges and prosecutors;**

(c) **Redouble its efforts to ensure that cases of violence against women are promptly and effectively investigated, that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished, and that the victims have access to effective remedies and means of protection;**

(d) **Expand the existing system for collecting comprehensive and disaggregated data on domestic violence to include information on complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences related to gender-based violence.**

#### **Enforced disappearance and missing persons**

17. The Committee notes the efforts made by the State party to identify disappeared Greek and Turkish Cypriots and to investigate their disappearance. However, it is concerned that there have been no recent prosecutions for those responsible for human rights violations resulting in individuals going missing, including possible enforced disappearance, and that there is no specific programme available to ensure appropriate redress to relatives of victims (arts. 2, 3, 6, 7 and 23).

18. **In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>6</sup> the State party should continue its efforts to support the work of the Committee on Missing Persons. The Committee urges the State party to take concrete steps to ensure that the families of the victims obtain full reparation, including adequate compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. It should also consider creating a truth and reconciliation commission, or a similar mechanism, and ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.**

#### **Prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment**

19. While noting the enactment in 2017 of Law No. 12(III)/2017, which provides for more severe penalties for offences of torture and ill-treatment, and the efforts made by the State party to ensure effective and impartial investigations, the Committee remains concerned about the limited amount of data available on complaints of torture and ill-treatment and about the small number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sanctions for perpetrators in relation to such acts. Furthermore, it is concerned about reports that the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against the Police is understaffed, and about the lack of information provided to the Committee on the effective remedies, including appropriate compensation, allocated to victims (arts. 7 and 10).

20. **The State party should increase its efforts to eradicate torture and ill-treatment. In this regard, it should:**

(a) **Ensure that all cases of torture, ill-treatment and death in custody are promptly, independently and thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished and adequately sanctioned, and that victims receive full reparation, including rehabilitation and adequate compensation;**

(b) **Guarantee that all persons deprived of their liberty are aware of and have access to an independent and effective complaints mechanism for the investigation of allegations of torture and ill-treatment and to the remedies referred to in article 2 (3) of the Covenant;**

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 10.

(c) **Take concrete steps to ensure that the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against the Police has sufficient human and financial resources to carry out its mandate effectively and independently;**

(d) **Continue its efforts to provide regular training to judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials on human rights, including on the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) and the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (Méndez Principles).**

#### **Conditions of detention**

21. While welcoming measures taken by the State party to expand capacity and improve conditions in places of detention, the Committee remains concerned about continued overcrowding and poor material conditions such as poor hygiene, lack of natural light, and dirty bed mattresses and pillows. It also notes that while there has been a significant decrease in the number of reported acts of violence in prisons, many incidents of violence may not have been recorded (arts. 6, 7 and 10).

22. **In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>7</sup> the State party should intensify its efforts to improve detention conditions and ensure full compliance with relevant international human rights standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). It should take additional measures to reduce overcrowding in all places of detention, particularly through the wider application of non-custodial measures as an alternative to imprisonment. The State party should strengthen its efforts to prevent and address inter-prisoner violence, including by encouraging the reporting of such violence and ensuring that all cases of prison violence are investigated and that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished.**

#### **Liberty and security of person**

23. The Committee is concerned about reports indicating an overreliance on pretrial detention in both law and practice, and that migrants awaiting deportation remain detained outside judicial control and for extended periods of time. Furthermore, it is concerned that migrants awaiting deportation orders are detained together with detainees charged with criminal offences (arts. 9 and 13).

24. **In the light of the Committee's general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, the State party should:**

(a) **Ensure that statutory limits on the duration of pretrial detention are enforced;**

(b) **Increase the availability of and recourse to alternatives to pretrial detention, in the light of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules);**

(c) **Ensure that persons awaiting deportation are detained for the shortest period of time necessary and adopt alternatives to detaining migrants and asylum-seekers whenever possible;**

(d) **Guarantee that persons being held in pretrial detention are held separately from convicted prisoners.**

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

25. The Committee welcomes the efforts taken by the State party to combat and prevent trafficking in persons, including the amendments in 2019 to the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and Protection of Victims Law, which significantly raised the penalties for trafficking offences under the law, and the creation in

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., para. 15.

2016 of the National Referral Mechanism. However, it is concerned about the continued prevalence of trafficking in persons, particularly of women and girls, for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation, about reported gaps in the identification of victims of trafficking in persons and about the low number of investigations, convictions and sanctions handed down to perpetrators (arts. 2, 7, 8 and 26).

**26. The State party should further strengthen its efforts to combat, prevent, eradicate and punish trafficking in persons, and ensure the adequate protection of victims. In particular, it should:**

(a) **Adopt the national action plan for the period 2023-2026 and take the necessary steps to ensure its full and effective implementation;**

(b) **Ensure that sufficient financial, technical and human resources are allocated to all the relevant institutions, including the National Referral Mechanism, responsible for preventing, combating and punishing trafficking in persons and for providing victims with protection and assistance;**

(c) **Continue and strengthen prevention and awareness-raising campaigns on the negative effects of trafficking in persons, and training for and specialization among public servants and other relevant stakeholders;**

(d) **Redouble its efforts to identify victims of trafficking in persons and to provide them with appropriate protection and assistance;**

(e) **Ensure that all cases of trafficking in persons are thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished and adequately sanctioned, and that victims receive full reparation, regardless of whether they cooperate with law enforcement authorities in investigations and criminal proceedings.**

#### **Freedom of movement**

27. While noting the State party's efforts to engage with the Turkish Cypriot leaders to ensure greater contact between the two parts of the island, including the opening of two new crossing points in 2018, the Committee remains concerned that barriers to intercommunal contact persist and that additional crossing points are still needed – for example, in the area of Kokkina – to allow more direct movement between areas in the northern and southern parts of the island. It is also concerned about the amendments introduced to the Refugee Law in 2014, which place restrictions on the movement of refugees who are subject to international protection, preventing them from travelling to the northern part of the island (arts. 2 and 12).

**28. In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>8</sup> the State party should increase its efforts to open new crossing points and take further measures to facilitate access for residents crossing between the northern and southern parts of the island. It should also consider reviewing the Refugee Law and the provisions restricting the movement of refugees who are subject to international protection, ensuring they are consistent with the State party's obligations under the Covenant and in the light of the Committee's general comments No. 15 (1986) and No. 27 (1999).**

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

29. The Committee acknowledges the significant contribution of the State party in hosting a large number of asylum-seekers and refugees and providing them with assistance and protection. However, it is concerned about reports indicating: (a) the increasing rate of detention of asylum-seekers; (b) the limited reception capacity for these persons; (c) that not all asylum-seekers at Pournara reception centre undergo a vulnerability assessment; (d) that asylum-seekers, including children, often remain at Pournara for several weeks or months; and (e) substandard conditions at reception facilities. Furthermore, while welcoming the establishment of "safe zones" for unaccompanied minors at Pournara, the Committee is

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., para. 17.

concerned that these “safe zones” are not appropriate for the long-term placement of unaccompanied minors (arts. 2, 7, 9, 10 and 13).

**30. The State party should take all the measures necessary to enhance protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. To this end, it should:**

(a) **Ensure that the detention of migrants and asylum-seekers is only used as a measure of last resort and is reasonable, necessary and proportionate, in accordance with the Committee’s general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, and that alternatives to detention are used in practice;**

(b) **Take concrete measures to improve the living conditions and treatment of persons in accommodation centres for asylum-seekers, ensuring they are in conformity with international standards;**

(c) **Improve the protection and care of unaccompanied children, in the light of the Committee’s general comment No. 17 (1989), and ensure that all children are placed in accommodation that ensures their access to health, education and leisure time;**

(d) **Continue its efforts to ensure that an age assessment is undertaken only in case of serious doubt about the age of the person concerned;**

(e) **Strengthen measures to ensure early identification, referral, assistance and support for all vulnerable asylum-seekers, including by establishing a formal and comprehensive procedure for identifying, assessing and addressing the specific needs of vulnerable asylum-seekers.**

#### **Non-refoulement**

31. The Committee commends the State party for its commitment to the principle of non-refoulement. However, it is concerned about multiple reports of pushbacks of migrants, both at sea and at the Green Line, which do not comply with the international obligation of non-refoulement (arts. 6, 7 and 13).

**32. In the light of the Committee’s previous recommendations,<sup>9</sup> the State party should increase its efforts to respect, in law and practice, the principle of non-refoulement by ensuring that asylum-seekers are not extradited, deported or expelled to a country where there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of irreparable harm, such as that set out in articles 6 and 7 of the Covenant. It should also take measures to ensure that independent and effective investigations are carried out into allegations of pushbacks of migrants, including persons who may be in need of international protection.**

#### **Juvenile justice system**

33. The Committee welcomes the adoption in 2021 of the Law on Children in Conflict with the Law (No. 55(I)/2021), providing for the establishment of a criminal justice system friendly to children in conflict with the law. However, the Committee remains concerned about remaining gaps in the implementation of the above-mentioned law and reports suggesting that juvenile pretrial detainees are not completely separated from convicted juveniles (arts. 14 and 24).

**34. The State party should intensify its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the Law on Children in Conflict with the Law, including by setting up specialized court facilities and providing them with adequate resources, including designating trained specialized judges. It should also continue its efforts to ensure that pretrial detention of minors is only used strictly in exceptional cases and as a last resort, and that juveniles held in pretrial detention are always held separately from convicted juvenile detainees.**

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., para. 13.



### Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

35. While noting the strong legal framework in place to protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the Committee remains concerned about reports suggesting that there are undue restrictions on the exercise in practice of this right by religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Jews. It is concerned about reports indicating: (a) that there is limited access to places of worship, including Hala Sultan Tekke mosque; (b) that the authorities continue to perform autopsies on deceased members of the Jewish community in cases of non-suspicious deaths; and (c) that the repeated requests for the Chief Rabbinate of Cyprus to be authorized to issue marriage, death and divorce certificates continue to go unanswered. Furthermore, the Committee remains concerned about the failure to revise article 2 of the Constitution, under which only those religious groups that had more than 1,000 members on the date on which the Constitution came into force, in 1960, are recognized, meaning that equal recognition is not accorded to all religious communities (arts. 2, 18 and 26).

**36. In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>10</sup> the State party should strengthen its efforts to ensure that its legislation and practices conform fully with the requirements of article 18 of the Covenant, including by taking immediate measures to remove undue restrictions on access to places of worship. It should also consider revising article 2 of the Constitution and ensure the full enjoyment of freedom of religion by all religious communities.**

37. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State party to respect the religious freedom of students by providing reasonable accommodation for them to practice their faith. However, it remains concerned by reports that children from religious minorities face social pressure to participate in Greek Orthodox religious services and religious instruction in school (arts. 2, 18 and 26).

**38. The State party should ensure that every student has the freedom to participate or not to participate in religious education in school, and that exemptions are easily available and not subject to burdensome administrative procedures. It should strengthen measures to promote respect and tolerance in school settings for religious diversity.**

### Freedom of expression

39. The Committee welcomes the entry into force in 2020 of the Law on Right of Access to Public Sector Information (No. 184(I)/2017). However, it is concerned that the State party has not amended or repealed the Law on the Procedure for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic, which criminalizes publications that use unofficial geographical names, and that the law could be invoked to curb freedom of expression, such as in 2019, when the Auditor General threatened to withhold subsidies from the *Cyprus Mail* by invoking that law after the newspaper had used the Turkish-language name for a village in northern Cyprus. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the State party has not indicated any measures taken to investigate or prosecute threats against the authors of the multilingual glossary of sensitive phrases entitled *Words That Matter*, published in 2018 (arts. 19 and 20).

**40. In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>11</sup> the State party should repeal the criminal provisions of the Law on the Procedure for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic. It should also review other provisions of the law to ensure that they serve a legitimate public purpose, are necessary and proportionate to the aims pursued and impose the least restrictive measures possible for the achievement of these aims, as set out in the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. The State party should conduct prompt, effective and impartial investigations into allegations of threats or violence against journalists, including against the authors of *Words That Matter*,**

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., para. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 21.

**ensure that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished, and provide the victims with effective remedies, including compensation.**

#### **Rights of the child**

41. The Committee is concerned about obstacles faced by certain children born in Cyprus to obtain Cypriot nationality. In particular, children of a third-country parent whose own nationality cannot be conferred on the children, and children of a Cypriot parent and a non-Cypriot parent who entered or remains in the country illegally, cannot obtain Cypriot nationality unless the Council of Ministers decides otherwise. In this regard, reports suggest that nearly all applications that require approval by the Council of Ministers are placed on hold or denied, resulting in children that have a de jure right to Cypriot citizenship being rendered de facto stateless (arts. 23, 24 and 26).

**42. The State party should review requirements with regard to obtaining Cypriot nationality for all children born in Cyprus and facilitate the acquisition of nationality for children who would otherwise be stateless, regardless of their parents' citizenship, residence or legal or marital status, with particular attention given to children born to refugee, asylum-seeking, migrant or stateless parents. The State party should consider ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the European Convention on Nationality and the Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession.**

#### **Right to participate in public life**

43. The Committee is concerned, particularly given the very low rates of Turkish Cypriots who exercise their right to vote, about reported obstacles hindering the voting rights of Turkish Cypriots, such as the distance from polling places, lack of access to information and the resulting limited Turkish Cypriot representation. It is also concerned that while Greek Cypriot inhabitants of the northern part of the island are able to stand for election in the area under the effective control of the Government, Turkish Cypriot inhabitants of the same area are prohibited from doing so. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about reports that persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with psychosocial disabilities are not adequately included, supported and trained to exercise their right to vote and to stand for election, with some also being legally deprived of those rights. It is also concerned about reports that other persons with disabilities lack the necessary support to participate fully in electoral processes (arts. 2, 25 and 26).

**44. The State party should take immediate steps to remove all barriers in law and in practice that inhibit Turkish Cypriots and persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with psychosocial disabilities, from exercising their right to vote and to stand for elections, giving full effect to the right of every citizen to participate in public affairs without discrimination and guaranteeing the full participation in political life of Turkish Cypriots and of all persons with disabilities.**

#### **Rights of minorities**

45. The Committee welcomes the submission to the European Commission in 2021 of the National Roma Strategic Framework for the period 2021–2030. However, it remains concerned about the low number of Turkish Cypriots in the State party's civil service, including the police force and the judiciary, and about the absence of envisaged specific measures aimed at changing this situation (arts. 2, 26 and 27).

**46. In the light of the Committee's previous recommendations,<sup>12</sup> the State party should continue and intensify its efforts to eradicate the economic, social, linguistic and cultural barriers facing Turkish Cypriots and other minorities, including by taking specific measures, such as temporary special measures, to integrate Turkish Cypriots into the civil service and the judiciary.**

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., para. 23.

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

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

48. In accordance with rule 75 (1) of the Committee's rules of procedure, the State party is requested to provide, by 27 July 2026, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in paragraphs 10 (non-discrimination, hate speech and hate crime), 24 (liberty and security of person) and 44 (right to participate in public life) above.

49. In line with the Committee's predictable review cycle, the State party will receive in 2029 the Committee's list of issues prior to submission of the report and will be expected to submit within one year its replies, which will constitute its sixth periodic report. The Committee also requests the State party, in preparing the report, to broadly consult civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. The next constructive dialogue with the State party will take place in Geneva in 2031.

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