



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

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Committee against Torture Eighty-second session

Summary record of the 2192nd meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 23 April 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Heller

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* No summary records were issued for the 2190th and 2191st meetings.

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

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

Third periodic report of Turkmenistan ([CAT/C/TKM/3](#); [CAT/C/TKM/Q/3](#); [CAT/C/TKM/RQ/3](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Turkmenistan joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Turkmenistan**, introducing his country's third periodic report ([CAT/C/TKM/3](#)), said that an interdepartmental human rights body established in 2017 had developed a plan for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Committee's concluding observations on the second periodic report ([CAT/C/TKM/CO/2](#)). Most of the recommendations had since been fully or partially implemented, while others were in the process of being implemented and were of a long-term nature.
3. During the reporting period, the Government had adopted a number of action plans aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of human rights and freedoms, including the National Plan of Action on Human Rights for the period 2021–2025, the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2025 and the National Plan of Action on Children's Rights for the period 2023–2028. The plans provided for a range of activities that took account of the concluding observations of international human rights treaty bodies, the recommendations arising from the universal periodic review process and the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The new version of the Criminal Code, which had entered into force on 1 January 2023, contained a definition of torture that was fully in line with article 1 of the Convention. Article 201 of the Code established criminal liability for acts of torture and explicitly excluded any justification for such acts, including references to orders from a superior officer or a public authority, exceptional circumstances or security threats. Turkmenistan had thus introduced the absolute prohibition of torture into its legislation, in accordance with international law.
5. In recent years, Turkmenistan had made consistent efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman. In 2024, two new departments had been established within the Office, for the protection of women's and children's rights and for the protection of the rights of persons in the private sector. Furthermore, work was currently under way to expand the powers of the Ombudsman to encompass the prevention of human rights violations. The Office continued to cooperate closely with United Nations bodies and other international organizations to bring its mandate fully into line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and to work towards accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions with category A status.
6. Turkmenistan had taken steps to improve the judicial system, including the adoption of the policy framework for the development of the judicial system for the period 2022–2028, the aim of which was to improve the laws governing the courts, promote professional development for judges and staff, modernize court facilities and expand international legal cooperation. The Courts Act, as amended in April 2025, incorporated key international standards, in particular those related to the independence and competence of judges.
7. Turkmenistan was implementing a gradual digitalization of the judicial system, including video and audio recording of court sessions, digital access to court information and services, online processing of applications from citizens and electronic document management systems, with a view to promoting the openness, transparency and accountability of the courts. In addition, between 2020 and 2025, lawyers had provided legal assistance in 530 cases of detention in which unlawful acts falling within the scope of the Convention had been identified.
8. Internal regulations had been introduced in Ministry of Internal Affairs institutions to govern detention conditions and protect the rights of detained and accused persons, including access to medical care, phone calls, visits, exercise and parcels. Particular attention was paid to medical supervision and the documentation of physical injuries. Every person entering a

penal institution underwent a compulsory medical examination. Any injuries detected were recorded and, in cases where violence was suspected, an additional investigation was carried out.

9. Between 2020 and 2023, major reconstruction and repairs had been carried out in 12 penal institutions in an effort to bring detention conditions into line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). The Office of the Ombudsman and oversight commissions conducted regular visits to places of detention, with a total of 20 visits undertaken between 2023 and 2024 alone. In 2023, a visit to one institution had been arranged for representatives of the diplomatic missions of the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany, France, Romania and Italy.

10. Criminal procedural law explicitly prohibited the use of evidence obtained under torture or through threats, deception or ill-treatment. Such evidence was inadmissible and excluded from proceedings. The practice of video recording of interrogations had been introduced in all facilities under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

11. Although there was no separate law on domestic violence, the Criminal Code provided for liability for violent acts in the home, in particular for cruel treatment, humiliation and degradation, and infliction of bodily harm. A national survey on the health and status of women, conducted in cooperation with the office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Turkmenistan, had been the first national effort to collect and analyse data on domestic violence against women. Based on its findings, a road map for the prevention of domestic violence for the period 2022–2025 had been developed.

12. Turkmenistan attached great importance to cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Government had approved a plan for cooperation with the ICRC office in Turkmenistan that envisaged a number of activities, including seminars and lectures on international law enforcement standards for the staff of relevant authorities, awareness-raising initiatives on international standards for the treatment of persons deprived of liberty, and meetings, consultations and exchanges of experience in the field of international humanitarian law and prison standards. The Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva continued to engage in dialogue with ICRC, including on the possible organization of visits to places of detention and the resumption of negotiations on a memorandum of understanding. Turkmenistan stood ready to consider any official request from ICRC.

13. **Mr. Buchwald** (Country Rapporteur) said that, as the submissions received by the Committee had made clear, despite the legal safeguards in place in Turkmenistan, there were numerous and persistent reports that persons had been subjected to enforced disappearance, that many wrongfully imprisoned persons remained behind bars and that those persons had been denied access to legal representation, to medical care and to their families and others in the outside world. The “Prove They Are Alive!” campaign had documented 162 cases of enforced disappearance, including at least 29 victims who were said to have died in custody, and Human Rights Watch an estimated 96 cases, with many victims being prisoners reported to have served their full terms but whose fates remained unknown. The allegations of enforced disappearance were coupled with reports of torture and ill-treatment, a lack of independent and impartial monitoring of places of deprivation of liberty, a lack of judicial independence, failure to investigate and prosecute the persons responsible for human rights violations and a culture of impunity. Those concerns had been raised in previous dialogues with the Committee and other human rights treaty bodies, during the universal periodic review process, in the country’s interactions with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and in its relations with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

14. Given the assertions made in the replies to the list of issues that there were no cases of incommunicado detention in Turkmenistan, that all detained persons were in constant contact with family members, relatives and lawyers, and that there were no cases of intimidation or repression or threats of arbitrary arrest of human rights defenders or journalists or their relatives (CAT/C/TKM/RQ/3, paras. 3 and 4), he would be interested to hear what, in the delegation’s view, accounted for the persistent reports of enforced

disappearance and torture. The replies also denied the existence of any complaints of torture (paras. 95 and 96), the absence of which should in itself raise questions as to whether the State Party had adequate mechanisms in place to ensure that allegations were indeed made to an independent authority and to identify possible cases of torture or ill-treatment. The Committee would therefore appreciate information on the existence of such mechanisms and on the measures taken to ensure that cases of torture or ill-treatment were brought to light. He would also be grateful if the delegation would review the aforementioned 162 cases of enforced disappearance in Turkmenistan and provide updated information in writing showing the Government's understanding of the current status of the cases and what it had done to investigate each one.

15. He wished to know what measures, other than legislative ones, Turkmenistan had taken to prevent torture, such as ensuring access to lawyers, doctors and independent judges, in accordance with article 2 of the Convention. He would welcome clarification not only of the legal rules but also the practical steps taken to ensure that the rights of detained persons were respected. He wondered whether detained persons had the right to be brought before a competent, independent and impartial court within 48 hours of arrest. He would like to know whether all detained persons had the right to challenge their detention through a writ of habeas corpus, how many such writs had been brought and what the results had been. In addition, he wondered whether all detentions were recorded in registers – both at the place of detention and in a central register – whether lawyers and family members had access to such registers, how often such registers had been made available to international observers and what the Government had done to ensure that the obligation to maintain such registers was being implemented in practice.

16. The delegation might explain whether detained persons had the right to be promptly informed, in a language they understood, both orally and in writing, of the charges against them and the reasons for their arrest. It would be useful to know in what circumstances suspects could exercise their right to free legal assistance. In that connection, he wondered what was being done to ensure that independent lawyers were not dissuaded from representing clients who might be seen as controversial, that there were enough independent lawyers, that they had the proper training and qualifications and that accused persons could be certain of their lawyers' independence, training and qualifications. It would be helpful to learn why so many trials were held behind closed doors and on what legal grounds the public could be kept out of the courtroom. It would be helpful, too, to learn whether persons deprived of their liberty could, as the Committee had recommended in its previous concluding observations (CAT/C/TKM/CO/2, para. 22 (d)), exercise their right to prompt contact with a family member or any other person of their choice immediately after being apprehended. He would also like to know whether detained persons had the right to a medical examination by an independent doctor within 24 hours of admission to a place of detention.

17. He wished to learn what arrangements were in place to monitor respect for each of the rights he had mentioned. He also wondered what had been done to discipline or otherwise punish officials who were responsible for breaches of those rights. Relevant statistical information would be particularly useful. He would like to know, for example, how many complaints of failure to respect fundamental legal safeguards had been received, how many investigations had been conducted, what the outcome of the investigations had been and how many officials had been punished.

18. According to reports, the State Party was, in essence, closed to international scrutiny. In that context, he wondered whether the Government intended to cooperate more closely with international mechanisms to combat torture and ill-treatment. He wished to know in particular whether any steps had been taken to allow visits by special procedure mandate holders and whether the Government had renewed its dialogue with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances with a view to facilitating a visit by the Group. He wished to know, too, whether ICRC had ready access, using its standard procedures, to all places of deprivation of liberty in the State Party and, if not, why not. He would welcome an explanation of the procedures in accordance with which representatives of international organizations could visit convicted persons in places of deprivation of liberty. He wished to know how many such visits had taken place in the past three years, what places had been

visited, what had been done to ensure that the visits were confidential and what steps had been taken to protect prisoners who had met such representatives from the risk of reprisals.

19. He wondered whether any progress had been made towards ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and whether the Government was considering making the declaration provided for in article 22 of the Convention and thus recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals who claimed to be victims of a violation of the provisions of the Convention. In addition, it would be interesting to know to what extent the State Party had sought the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for its efforts to fulfil its human rights obligations.

20. A description of the steps that had been taken to raise public awareness of international human rights protections would be welcome. He wished to know, for instance, what had been done to disseminate the Committee's previous concluding observations, whether an Internet user in Ashgabat could watch the current dialogue live on United Nations Web TV or read, in Turkmen, the Views adopted by the Human Rights Committee in the case of *Kyarizov v. Turkmenistan*, and whether a translated version of the concluding observations on the State Party's third periodic report would be posted promptly to a government website. He wished to know, too, whether the National Plan of Action on Human Rights could be consulted on a government website and, if so, whether the delegation could give him the weblink.

21. If the data that the Committee had requested in the list of issues in relation to the State Party's third periodic report – on matters such as applications for asylum, prison overcrowding, deaths in custody and the age and sex of persons under physical restraint in psychiatric institutions – were available, it would be useful to have them. If no such data were available, he wished to know to what extent the authorities were focusing on the problem of data collection, what specifically they were doing to develop the capacity to collect data and whether they were in fact committed to solving the problem.

22. He would welcome a comment from the delegation on the independence of the Office of the Ombudsman, about which a number of concerns had been raised, including by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the Human Rights Committee. It had been pointed out, for example, that the Ombudsman was appointed by the President with no input from civil society, that lawmakers could remove the Ombudsman and that members of the Office staff did not enjoy protection from prosecution for their professional activities.

23. He wished to know what steps, if any, had been taken to allay concerns that the Office did not monitor places of detention effectively and that Office staff, as opposed to the Ombudsman herself, had no mandate to visit such places. Likewise, he wished to know whether prior authorization was required for the Ombudsman to visit places of detention and, if so, how that apparent requirement and the provisions for access without prior notice contained in both the Ombudsman Act and the Penalties Enforcement Code could be reconciled. In addition, he wondered whether the Ombudsman had visited Ovadan-Depe and Akdash Prisons and, if not, why. Disaggregated data and other information on the visits made by the Ombudsman to places of detention would be appreciated.

24. It would be helpful to learn whether the authorities had considered the fairness of article 22 (1) of the Ombudsman Act, under which complaints from individuals could be considered only within a period of 18 months from the moment at which the individual became aware of the violation of his or her rights, why that provision had been adopted and whether steps might be taken to repeal it. As anonymous submissions to the Ombudsman were prohibited under article 24 of the Act, he wished to know what measures were taken to ensure that complaints remained confidential and how complainants could be certain that they would not be subjected to reprisals. He wished to know, too, why, as had been acknowledged, there had been so few appeals to the Ombudsman during the reporting period, exactly how many had been received and what the outcomes had been.

25. He would be interested to hear whether the Office of the Ombudsman had made legislative proposals in a bid to help ensure that the State Party fulfilled its human rights obligations, whether it had recommended that the State Party should accede to any particular international human rights instruments – the Optional Protocol, for instance, or the

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance – and whether it had called on the authorities to do more to facilitate visits by special procedure mandate holders. In addition, it would be helpful to learn how many times the Ombudsman had concluded that a human rights violation had been committed, how many people she had found responsible for such violations and to which authorities she had transmitted her recommendations for restoring the rights that had been violated.

26. He wondered what steps, if any, were being taken to ensure fair and accessible asylum procedures. In particular, he wondered whether the State Party was giving international protection to Afghan civilians fleeing their country and whether ICRC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees could be given greater access to border areas and places of detention. Up-to-date statistical data relating to asylum, which the Committee had requested previously, would be especially welcome. If the Committee's request could not be complied with, it would be helpful to know why not and what steps were being taken to establish a system, as recommended by the Committee, for the collection of such data. It would also be helpful to know whether it was true that people who were neither nationals of the State Party nor holders of documents affirmatively demonstrating their lack of any other nationality were not recognized as stateless.

27. In view of reports of the abuses to which members of religious minorities, including the Balochi minority, were subjected, in particular while in custody, he wondered what had been done to ensure that detention conditions met human rights standards, investigate the beating death of Allamurat Khudairamov, the denial of medical care to Mansur Mingelov, a protester serving a long prison sentence, and the allegations of torture made by Akoyli Khanpur, punish anyone found responsible and ensure that such crimes were not committed in the future.

28. He would welcome the delegation's response to concerns about the alleged targeting by the authorities of government critics living in exile abroad, including Rovsen Klucsev, Dovran Imamov, Serdar Durdylev, Merdan Mukhamedov and Malikberdi Allamyradov. He wondered what steps were being taken to ensure that no one was deprived of his or her right to travel outside the country and that interference with the right of activists or other persons to engage with the United Nations or other human rights organizations was not tolerated. In particular, he wished to know how the authorities had responded to the appeal of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders to guarantee the safety of Gurbansoltan Achilova and allow her to travel.

29. **Mr. Liu** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would be grateful to receive an outline of current training programmes on the prohibition against torture and ill-treatment, along with an indication as to whether such training was mandatory, how often it took place and what percentage of personnel had participated in it. It would be helpful to receive details of any methods currently used to evaluate the impact of the training and any systematic assessments developed with a view to ensuring that it led to improvements in practice. Given that the country's legislation provided for direct application of international law, it would be interesting to hear whether training on international instruments on the prohibition against torture was conducted separately from other programmes.

30. He would like to know whether judicial, forensic and medical personnel received specialized training on detecting and documenting the physical and psychological consequences of torture and whether programmes included instruction on the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), as revised, and other relevant international documents. Were there other regulatory frameworks for ensuring that anti-torture principles were comprehensively integrated into medical and psychiatric practices, besides the Psychiatric Care Act?

31. Information on training for law enforcement personnel on the appropriate use of force, as requested in the list of issues (CAT/C/TKM/Q/3, para. 58), would be appreciated. It would also be useful to learn how much training was provided on ensuring the respectful treatment of women, children, members of ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups, who oversaw such training across government departments and to what extent international personnel were involved in designing and delivering it.

32. He would be interested to hear what proportion of places of deprivation of liberty now had equipment for recording interrogations; whether it was mandatory to record all interrogations conducted at those facilities; whether persons being interrogated had the right to have their interrogations recorded and, if so, whether interrogators must inform them of that right beforehand; whether failure to record interrogations resulted in their inadmissibility as evidence or had any other consequences; and whether accused persons and their lawyers had unrestricted access to such recordings and were freely able to use them as evidence in court.

33. He would be grateful to receive statistical data on pretrial detention, as previously requested by the Committee, along with information on alternatives to pretrial detention, if any existed, the frequency with which such alternatives had been used and efforts to expand their use. It would also be useful to receive data on the occupancy rates of places of detention, disaggregated by facility, and to learn what steps had been taken to reduce occupancy rates.

34. The State Party might clarify whether prisoners were examined by independent doctors within 24 hours of their arrival at penal establishments; whether prisoners with diseases like tuberculosis were separated from other inmates; whether prisoners received adequate care and had access to sufficient supplies of medication provided to them free of charge; and whether corruption was an issue in the prison healthcare system. He wondered what steps the State Party was taking to achieve improvements in those areas. According to testimony by Akmuhammed Bayhonov, some prisoners went months without access to outdoor areas; he would like to know whether that was the case.

35. The delegation might respond to numerous reports that prisoners in solitary confinement were held in extremely harsh conditions in well-like punishment cells known as “*kartser*”, with virtually no light and limited access to water and basic hygiene facilities. It would be helpful to hear which facilities contained such cells and how their use was regulated and documented. In addition, he would appreciate statistical information on how often solitary confinement was used, for what periods and how often its duration exceeded 15 days, which was prohibited under the Nelson Mandela Rules. He wished to know whether any steps had been taken to gradually end the use of prolonged solitary confinement and what action the State Party was taking to address reports of the use of solitary confinement as a tool of repression against political prisoners, particularly in Ovadan-Depe and Akdash Prisons. He wondered whether persons in solitary confinement were guaranteed sufficient food and basic necessities, whether or not they could afford to buy them themselves. It would be interesting to learn what rules governed whether persons in solitary confinement were granted permission to receive visits and make phone calls and ensured that such permission was not withheld unfairly and, likewise, how it was determined whether remand prisoners were permitted to receive visits from relatives.

36. Regarding access to counsel, it would be useful to hear what steps were taken to ensure that meetings between remand prisoners and their lawyers were completely private, that prisoners could be confident that no one was able to overhear such meetings and that there was no possibility of reprisals against prisoners for anything they might say. Did any provisions in Turkmen law explicitly provide that suspects could not be interrogated before their counsel could attend or that the refusal of suspects to give testimony could not be used against them?

37. He would welcome disaggregated data on inter-prisoner violence, as requested in the list of issues (CAT/C/TKM/Q/3, para. 17). In addition, he wished to know whether any provision was made to ensure that family members of persons who died in custody were able to order an independent autopsy. It would be interesting to learn what mechanisms had been put in place with a view to ensuring that victims of both inter-prisoner violence and acts of violence committed by prison staff came forward and whether the State Party had established any comprehensive plans for addressing violence in prisons.

38. The delegation might comment on the exceedingly broad set of circumstances in which it appeared that internal affairs officers were permitted to use physical force under the Internal Affairs Agencies Act. He wished to know whether the same set of circumstances could be used to justify the use of firearms. It would be useful to learn what it meant, under the Act, to be protecting the “legitimate interests of citizens”, what qualified as a “socially

dangerous act” and where the relevant definitions could be found. He would welcome disaggregated data, if available, on the number of complaints of excessive use of force by officers that had been lodged, the number of investigations launched in response and their outcomes. Given the inherently vulnerable position of victims and their likely reluctance to come forward, he wondered what mechanisms the State Party had established for proactively identifying and investigating suspected cases of excessive use of force.

39. The Committee would be interested to know to what extent monitoring mechanisms that were independent of the health authorities had access to psychiatric institutions and could address complaints by persons who claimed to have been detained in such institutions without their consent and for non-medical reasons. The delegation might provide its views on the extent of the abuse that patients reportedly suffered at the hands of staff and reports that such abuse was committed with impunity. He would appreciate details of any complaints mechanisms available to patients and their representatives and any steps that were being taken to improve such mechanisms. It would be useful to learn how many complaints had been submitted, what issues they concerned, how many had been investigated and what the outcome of those investigations had been. He would welcome information on any cases in which a judge had decided that an application for involuntary institutionalization should not be granted and had ordered the release of the person in question. He also wished to know how the State Party oversaw the procedure for involuntary institutionalization with a view to assessing how well it worked. It would be helpful to learn more about the laws and procedures governing the use of restraints in psychiatric institutions and to be provided with data on the number of cases in which restraints had been used during the reporting period, the age and sex of the persons concerned, the psychiatric institutions involved, the period for which the restraints had been applied and the type of restraints employed.

40. He would like to know what concrete steps the State Party was taking to ensure that independent and free medical examinations were made available to persons who claimed to have been subjected to torture and that effective protection from reprisals was provided to victims and witnesses who came forward. He wondered if he had understood correctly that the State Party had not responded to the Committee’s request for data relating to compensation for torture because, as stated in the replies to the list of issues, there had been no cases of torture or ill-treatment in the country. It would nevertheless be helpful to learn what measures were in place for dealing with issues of redress and compensation in the event that a case of torture or ill-treatment did occur. Did the State Party have any programmes for providing specialized treatment for trauma or other forms of rehabilitation to victims, did it budget for that possibility and did it have training programmes in place for ensuring that personnel who could provide such treatment were available?

41. He wondered whether there had been any cases before or since the reporting period in which courts had found evidence to be inadmissible because it had been obtained through torture or ill-treatment. He also wished to know whether, in line with article 15 of the Convention, Turkmen law provided, by way of exception, that a statement established to have been made as a result of the use of torture could be invoked against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement had been made.

42. The Committee would be grateful to learn how many cases of violence against children had been reported by juvenile affairs inspectors, how many had been classified as crimes and how many as administrative offences, and how they had subsequently been handled. It would be helpful to hear how many cases the juvenile interrogation centres recently established in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat had dealt with and what role they had played in those cases. Further details of steps taken to prevent corporal punishment and establish an appropriate juvenile justice system that included alternatives to detention and was overseen by specialized juvenile judges would be appreciated.

43. It would be useful to know whether the road map for the prevention of domestic violence was available to the public online and what advances the State Party assessed had been achieved under the road map. He wondered what progress the State Party had made in adopting legislation to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence and what obstacles it faced in doing so. He wished to know more about efforts to engage with and train police, healthcare and social service personnel in preventing gender-based violence and to raise awareness among women about their rights, and to hear how the State Party evaluated the

effectiveness of those efforts. Information on how many shelters were available for victims of gender-based violence, how many domestic violence hotlines had been established and how many victims had made use of each service would be appreciated. In addition, he would welcome the delegation's comments on reports that girls had been subjected to virginity tests without their consent or that of their parents, then reported to the police if they were found to have had sexual relations, and information about any steps taken to prevent such practices from recurring.

44. **Mr. Contesse** said that he wondered which international organizations the State Party had cooperated with in its implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism and the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking. He would appreciate clarification as to whether a new counter-terrorism strategy had been adopted for the current period. He wished to know how fundamental safeguards and legal remedies were ensured in practice for persons suspected of terrorism or other security-related offences. It would be useful to receive detailed information about the legal framework for combating terrorism and violent extremism. He wished to be provided with data on the number of persons convicted under anti-terrorism legislation. Lastly, he would like to know about the outcomes of any complaints regarding non-compliance with international standards and any reforms made to bring counter-terrorism or criminal justice policy into line with the State Party's international obligations.

45. **Ms. Racu** said that she wished to receive up-to-date disaggregated data on the number of juveniles, including girls, currently in detention and the types of offence for which they were being held, along with information about their detention conditions, in both prisons and pretrial detention facilities. She wondered what measures were in place to prevent overcrowding in juvenile detention centres, ensure access to healthcare and protect against physical and psychological abuse. She would also appreciate information on the activities available for children in detention. She would be interested to learn about any mechanisms in place to allow independent bodies, including international organizations, to make unannounced visits to juvenile detention centres. She would like to know whether juveniles in detention had access to a confidential complaint mechanism. If so, the delegation might provide statistics on any such complaints and their outcomes.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10 p.m. and resumed at 12.30 p.m.

46. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that over US\$ 14 million had been allocated to improve prison infrastructure over the previous five years. Since 2023, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had completed major construction and renovation projects and had procured specialized equipment, including medical equipment, for the prison estate. Prison staff had been trained on upholding inmates' rights.

47. The purpose of the construction work was to bring older buildings into compliance with international standards rather than to address any alleged overcrowding. Indeed, the prison population had decreased by 4.5 per cent in 2023 and 3.2 per cent in 2024. The prison system currently had an occupancy rate of 83 per cent. The use of conditional release, parole and commutation of the unserved portion of a sentence had helped reduce the number of inmates, as had the practice of issuing presidential pardons, usually on national holidays and during Ramadan.

48. Inmates were provided with all necessary food, bedding, medicines and personal hygiene items, funded from the State budget. A presidential order had established improved standards for food, clothing and personal hygiene in prisons, remand centres and special rehabilitation centres. Prisoners were treated in the medical units located in all prisons or transferred to a central hospital for specialized treatment. Prisoners with infectious diseases did not remain among the general population but were immediately transferred to the central hospital. From 2022 to 2024, inmates had made 20 complaints of violations of their rights by prison staff. Following thorough investigation, none had been upheld.

49. Between 2022 and 2024, internal affairs officials had participated in over 2,000 training courses covering international standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, the Code of Conduct for Law

Enforcement Officials and the Principles of Medical Ethics relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

50. During the reporting period, various orders and directives relating to torture prevention or detention conditions had been issued or updated, on subjects including improved oversight of places of detention, the establishment of a special unit to investigate incidents in places of detention, the payment of wages to inmates, new prison rules, the prevention of drug contraband, the enhancement of prison security and the establishment of a special unit to conduct medical examinations in prisons.

51. In accordance with the relevant legislation, the Ombudsman had unhindered access to all places of detention and could make unannounced visits. She continuously monitored compliance with the law in prisons, remand centres and involuntary treatment centres. In 2023, she had visited institution MR-E/14 and found that some buildings dating from the 1960s had inadequate sanitary conditions and thus were not in compliance with the Penalties Enforcement Code. The recommendations made following the visit were in the process of implementation. During her visit to institution MR-E/15, the Ombudsman had verified compliance with healthcare standards, which were found to be broadly upheld. She had recommended enhanced monitoring of compliance with legal requirements for healthcare in all places of detention and the recruitment of medical personnel to fill vacant posts. Work to implement the recommendations was ongoing. The visits had included private conversations with inmates, who had expressed regret for their actions and a desire for parole but had not made any complaints.

52. During the same period, the Ombudsman had also monitored the juvenile detention centre and the women's prison and had not received any complaints. On the basis of her visits, the Ombudsman had concluded that there was a need to strengthen the work of the oversight commissions to improve supervision of respect for the rule of law in prisons and work with persons released on parole. She had sent proposals to that effect to all the country's municipalities and oblasts (provinces), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Office of the Procurator General. Police stations, remand centres and prisons were being provided with equipment to record interrogations with a view to torture prevention. The leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, procurators, judges, the Ombudsman and defence lawyers all had access to the recordings.

53. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that combating gender-based violence was one of the seven priorities set out in the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality. Under the Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, men and women were assured equal protection from all forms of domestic violence. The survey on the health and status of women had provided important data on intimate partner violence, taking into account aspects including sociodemographic factors, regional variations, the impact of violence on women's health and children's well-being, and survival strategies, and had shown that 12 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 59 years had experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. The road map for the prevention of domestic violence had been disseminated through seminars conducted in all the country's oblasts and the awareness-raising efforts of the Women's Union of Turkmenistan. The road map provided for legislative amendments and the development of standard operating procedures. Procedures for healthcare workers, police officers and social workers had already been drafted, with a view to ensuring the provision of services for female victims of domestic violence based on respect for human rights, victims' interests, confidentiality and ethical standards. Regulations on the inter-agency response to domestic violence were under development. Under a pilot project soon to be rolled out on a permanent basis, family support centres had been established under the auspices of the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan with technical support from UNFPA, providing psychological support and legal advice and operating 24-hour hotlines. A voluntary organization operated an additional hotline offering support and psychological services.

54. The Social Services Act of 2021 set out the legal and organizational basis for social support to groups in difficult situations, including persons affected by violence and persons whose life was in danger. Social work specialists were active in all oblasts, working in cooperation with voluntary organizations providing psychosocial support and rehabilitation programmes, including to female victims of domestic violence. A separate law on domestic violence was currently being developed, based on lessons learned from other countries.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.