



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

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
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Summary record of the 3086th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 9 August 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan (continued)
([CERD/C/PAK/24-26](#); [CERD/C/PAK/Q/24-26](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Pakistan joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** (Country Rapporteur), noting that there was a reported backlog in the courts of over 2 million cases, said that he wished to know what measures the State party had taken to reform and expedite court processes and procedures. He wondered whether victims of racial discrimination faced procedural obstacles preventing their access to justice and whether legal aid centres had been established to provide support to ethnic minorities. He would welcome an update on the status of the appeal that had been lodged in the case of Junaid Hafeez, who had been arrested in 2013, held in solitary confinement since 2014 and convicted and sentenced to the death penalty in 2019.
3. The Committee had received information to suggest that, although the Supreme Court had declared unlawful the traditional system of justice dispensed by local councils of men, known as *jirga*, the practice was still widespread. He would be interested to know what the State party was doing, in law and in practice, to combat that nefarious practice; whether it might consider enacting a federal law to prohibit *jirgas*; and whether the delegation could provide updated information on a case concerning five *jirga* members who had been arrested for arranging a settlement with an alleged rapist of a minor girl.
4. Regarding the independence of the judiciary, he would be curious to know whether there was a direct link between the resignation of the President of Pakistan, in 2008, and the firing by him of the Chief Justice and some 60 other judges. He would like to know the status of an investigation into complaints that had been made by several Islamabad High Court judges alleging interference in the exercise of their duties by the security and intelligence agencies. He would appreciate an account of how judges were appointed, including the qualifications required; on what grounds a judge could be removed from office and whether there was a specific mechanism responsible for making such decisions; whether judges had security of tenure; whether there was a mandatory age of retirement; and whether the practice of appointing judges on renewable contracts, subject to their performance, might put at risk the independence of the judiciary. It would be helpful to have information on the process of appointing judges to sit on the anti-terrorism courts, including the term for which they were appointed and the qualifications and experience required; and data on the representation of minority groups in the judiciary, including in the lower and higher provincial and district courts.
5. He would be interested to learn what measures the State party had taken to ensure that the family members of all 11 Hazara Shia coal miners who had been killed in Balochistan by Da'esh, in 2021, had received effective redress and been compensated for their loss.
6. With reference to paragraph 28 of the State party's report ([CERD/C/PAK/24-26](#)), he would welcome information on the National Commission for Human Rights, including on whether it had been operating uninterrupted since 2015; why seemingly very little of the budget at its disposal had been spent between 2015 and 2019; whether members of the Commission were appointed for a specific term; how the Chairperson of the Commission was selected; and whether it was considered adequate that one member represented the State party's myriad minority communities. He would appreciate up-to-date information on cases against a number of individuals alleged to have desecrated Ahmadi graves in Punjab and on the reasons underlying the increase in blasphemy cases. According to the Commission, a number of persons who had been detained on charges of blasphemy had allegedly been victims of entrapment. What was the current status of their cases?
7. He would be grateful to know more about the State party's efforts to strengthen the National Commission for Minorities, including the Commission's mandate, the procedure for appointing its members, its decision-making process and the establishment of a standard

operating procedure for cooperation between it and the National Commission for Human Rights.

8. He would be interested to learn about the outcomes of the recommendations that had been made by the National Curriculum Council to update school curricula to promote interfaith harmony and social cohesion and remove hate speech or stereotyping of minorities from teaching and textbooks.

9. **A representative of Pakistan** said that the independence, impartiality, jurisdiction and powers of the judiciary were enshrined in the relevant articles of the Constitution, in which the procedures for the appointment and removal of judges of the superior courts, as well as judges' remuneration and other service conditions, were also laid down. The Supreme Judicial Council, which was composed of the most senior judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, could recommend to the President, on the basis of information received, that a judge should be removed on the grounds of misconduct or physical or mental incapacity. The Judicial Commission of Pakistan was responsible for the appointment of judges of the superior courts through a transparent and merit-based process, thereby ensuring that the process was free of executive influence. Judges in the lower courts were appointed through a competitive examination. In accordance with article 209 (8) of the Constitution, the Council had issued a code of conduct for judges, in which the need for ethical conduct and the principles of impartiality, integrity and independence of the judiciary were emphasized. The federal and provincial judicial academies provided continuous professional education and training for judges to enhance their understanding of laws and of their ethical responsibilities.

10. Minority groups were represented among the staff of the provincial and higher courts. While there were no high court judges belonging to minority groups, they were represented at the provincial level. For example, out of around 700 district court judges in Sindh Province, 24 belonged to minority groups.

11. To ensure access to justice for vulnerable persons, the Legal Aid and Justice Authority was responsible, in accordance with the Legal Aid and Justice Authority Act of 2020, for the provision of legal aid and financial or other forms of assistance to accused persons who were unable to afford legal representation. Among its other duties, the Authority promoted access to justice by establishing panels of advocates and volunteers and by taking measures to improve legal literacy and awareness among the general public. The Women in Distress and Detention Fund now fell under the remit of the Authority, and priority in the allocation of legal aid was given to women and children in cases of domestic violence. The Authority was also engaged in workshops to raise awareness of institutional linkages, training on alternative dispute resolution and initiatives aimed at digitalizing legal aid to facilitate provision of such assistance.

12. The National Commission for Minorities had been established, in 2020, to advocate for the rights of minorities and promote interfaith harmony. A bill to establish the Commission as an independent body with statutory status had recently been passed by the National Assembly.

13. In April 2024, the Chief Justice of Pakistan had assembled a panel of judges to hear the case concerning the Islamabad High Court judges who had alleged intimidation and interference by the intelligence agencies in judicial decisions. It was nevertheless important to bear in mind that the allegations had yet to be verified and that a negative propaganda and misinformation campaign against the security services was currently being waged by certain actors.

14. **A representative of Pakistan** said that the Supreme Court had taken suo motu notice of the allegations that had been made in a letter dated 25 March 2024 from six Islamabad High Court judges addressed to the Supreme Judicial Council and copied to all judges and the registrar of the Supreme Court. In view of the seriousness of the allegations, it had been decided that the Court would consider the matter under article 184 (3) of the Constitution. The matter was currently sub judice.

15. As a result of the decision of the Supreme Court ruling that *jirgas* were unlawful and government efforts to ensure that the Constitution, its laws and the jurisdiction of the courts

were applicable to the entire territory, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, in accordance with the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/PAK/CO/21-23](#), para. 6), *jirgas* were no longer widespread in those Areas. However, while the necessary legal changes had been made, it would take longer to shift the cultural mindset of the local population, since *jirgas* were a traditional means of dispensing justice that long predated the independence of Pakistan. The Government was nevertheless committed to ensuring the full implementation of the legal system.

16. **A representative of Pakistan** said that the judges who sat on the anti-terrorism courts had either retired from the high or session courts or otherwise had the necessary legal experience. They were appointed under section 14 of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

17. The National Commission for Human Rights was a fully independent statutory body composed of members representative of all provinces and minorities in Pakistan, in accordance with the Paris Principles. The Chairperson of the Commission was nominated by the Cabinet and the leader of the opposition and appointed by a parliamentary committee for a term of four years, during which he or she had security of tenure. The current Chairperson had been appointed in 2021; that appointment had been delayed by around 18 months owing to a court order that had been issued at the behest of the previous Chairperson. The Commission's budget had been increased from some 143 million Pakistan rupees in 2022–2023 to more than 183 million Pakistan rupees in 2024–2025. The Commission had a broad mandate that included intervening as a party in court proceedings involving allegations of human rights violations, conducting research and developing relevant national action plans. Pursuant to the National Commission for Human Rights Act of 2012, the Commission had full operational independence and financial autonomy.

18. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he wondered whether the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as conciliation, arbitration and mediation, might be considered as a means of tackling the large backlog of court cases.

19. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she had not been entirely satisfied with the response provided in the previous meeting (see [CERD/C/SR.3085](#)) with regard to cases of the abduction, conversion and forced marriage of girls. The Committee had received information that very few abductors had been prosecuted and that the police had allegedly forced parents to attest that the girls had reached the age of majority, thereby enabling the perpetrators to avoid prosecution. She therefore wished to know how many perpetrators had been prosecuted and convicted, and the sentences that had been imposed, for the abduction, conversion and forced marriage of minor girls; who could apply on behalf of a minor girl for such a marriage to be annulled, given that they were illegal; whether persons who performed such marriages were prosecuted; and what measures were being taken to ensure the effective implementation of the legal age of marriage, especially with regard to Sheedi girls, who faced multiple forms of discrimination.

20. She would like to know more about how the National Commission for Human Rights was accountable to the parliament and what powers it had to address complaints.

21. **Mr. Guan** said that he, too, would appreciate more detailed information about the National Commission, including how it carried out its mandate, and examples of its outputs.

22. **Mr. Diaby**, noting that several of the questions he had raised in the previous meeting had gone unanswered, including those concerning the situation of the Sheedi minority, said that he would be interested to receive information on cases involving human rights defenders advocating for the rights of ethno-religious minorities. In particular, he wished to know whether the assault, in June 2022, on the journalist Ayaz Amir had been investigated and whether the perpetrators had been arrested; whether the journalist Imran Riaz Khan, who had been arrested some two years previously, had now appeared before a judge; and what the current status was of the case involving Shireen Mazari, the country's former Minister of Human Rights.

23. He would like to know whether provision was made for interpreters to ensure that there were no linguistic barriers to access to justice for Sheedi and other minorities who might not speak the official languages of Pakistan; to what extent the Government had implemented the non-binding recommendations of the National Commission for Human Rights; whether

the Commission had regional offices nationwide; and whether allegations of the excessive use of force, expropriation of land and other abuses by the armed forces were heard in the ordinary courts or in military courts.

24. **Ms. Tlakula**, referring to the State party's follow-up report to the Committee's previous concluding observations (CERD/C/PAK/CO/21-23/Add.1, para. 21), said that she would welcome updated information on the implementation of the 2014 National Action Plan to Combat Terrorism, including on the measures taken to register and regulate madrasas.

25. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome the delegation's comments on reports that, under the Green Pakistan Initiative, land in predominantly ethnic minority and pastoral communities had been seized on security grounds by the Pakistan Army. The Lahore High Court had reportedly questioned the constitutionality of one such land transfer in Bhakkar district and issued a stay order; however, the land had apparently been transferred regardless, without compensation having been paid to the community. Such actions had apparently led to the forced displacement of local communities and enforced disappearances.

26. **Mr. Guissé** said that he wished to know what measures the State party was taking to strengthen the capacities of persons of African descent in Pakistan, defuse tensions between the Sunni and Shiite Muslim communities and address the reported practice of deporting Afghan refugees.

27. **A representative of Pakistan** said that efforts were being made to address the backlog of around 2.2 million court cases, which had resulted largely from a lack of funds and a shortage of judges.

28. Allegations of enforced disappearances were of great concern and measures were being taken to ensure that such incidents did not occur. However, such allegations had not been verified. Over the past two years, there had been a constant stream of anti-State propaganda on social media against the security and intelligence agencies.

29. **A representative of Pakistan** said that the National Commission for Human Rights had branches in all four provinces of Pakistan, as had been verified by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. To date, the Commission had received and resolved more than 7,000 complaints; carried out more than 170 visits to prisons around the country; and issued various publications and reports. It had the powers of a civil court in the Pakistan judicial system, powers of investigation and inquiry, and suo motu authority to hear complaints.

30. Under the Pakistan Penal Code, forced marriage was prohibited and the kidnapping or abduction of a girl or a woman for the purpose of coercing or compelling her to enter into marriage was punishable by a term of imprisonment of 7 years. The Child Marriage Restraint Act was being reviewed by the parliament, with a view to bringing it into line with the various personal status laws, which had recently been updated to set the legal age of marriage at 18 years old.

31. There were no linguistic barriers to access to justice. In Sindh Province, for example, English, Urdu and Sindhi were used. Furthermore, most of the population understood and could communicate in Urdu.

32. **A representative of Pakistan** said that judges who were appointed to the anti-terrorism courts had to have at least 10 years' experience in the relevant field. Similarly, High Court judges had to be at least 45 years old, have the necessary experience and pass an interview. In an effort to address the backlog of court cases, two ad hoc judges of the Supreme Court had been sworn in to hear some cases.

33. The appeal in the case of Junaid Hafeez was pending. In the meantime, his lawyers had various avenues open to them, including the filing of a criminal miscellaneous application for an early hearing in the High Court.

34. **A representative of Pakistan** said that, as Muslims, the Sheedi community were considered not as a religious minority but as part of the majority in Pakistan. There were several mechanisms for the reporting of complaints of racial discrimination against members of the Sheedi community, including the Sindh Human Rights Commission.

35. Members of the armed forces could be court martialled for breaking the law. When it came to transfers of agricultural land and allegations of enforced disappearances of members of ethnic minorities in Punjab Province, it should be highlighted that many allegations were unverified, politically motivated and used to spread misinformation. The concerns raised by the Committee would, however, be investigated and further information would be provided.

36. As of April 2024, over 17,000 religious schools, or madrasas, had been registered in Pakistan; the majority were located in Punjab Province. Regional and district centres had been established to manage such schools, and a memorandum of understanding had been signed with the aim of ensuring the gradual introduction of contemporary subjects into their curricula. The schools would also be affiliated to the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education in the mainstream educational system. Some 2,500 madrasa students were taking vocational training courses at technical colleges around the country. Government-registered madrasas received funding towards the cost of student accommodation and food, and students received a monthly stipend from the relevant provincial government. In addition to madrasas, over 25,000 alternate learning programme centres had been established nationwide, with more than 900,000 students enrolled.

37. **A representative of Pakistan** said that misinformation campaigns by political parties on social media included allegations of the involvement of the security forces in enforced disappearances, leaving the real culprits – anti-State actors – to go free. Certain parts of the country were plagued by the presence of terrorist networks, which had been involved in a recent spate of kidnappings. A commission of inquiry had been set up and the number of missing persons had been reduced significantly, thanks to cooperation with the law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Those agencies were critical to efforts to tackle insecurity and protect the people of Pakistan from banned or terrorist groups, including the Balochistan Liberation Army and its offshoot, the Baloch Yakjehti Committee. Alongside the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, the superior courts had the authority to address alleged cases of enforced disappearance, and their efforts were buttressed by an independent media and a dynamic civil society. Nevertheless, it was a complex, multifaceted phenomenon; there were a multitude of reasons as to why persons went missing, such as personal or tribal enmities, involvement in criminal activities, kidnapping for ransom, people smuggling and irregular immigration, as well as socioeconomic factors.

38. The National Curriculum Council was reviewing school curricula with a view to identifying and eliminating content containing hate speech or discrimination and incorporating human rights concepts. Religious education on minority faiths had also been introduced for pupils belonging to religious minorities, giving effect to article 22 (1) of the Constitution, according to which children of those minorities should not be forced to study a religion other than their own. Model textbooks and syllabuses for the teaching of those minority faiths had been finalized. In addition, global human rights perspectives had been incorporated in the curricula, as had information and communications technology and the promotion of digital literacy.

The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

39. **Ms. Boker-Wilson**, expressing the Committee's concern regarding the outcomes of the investigations into the alleged cases of forced marriage and forced conversion detailed in paragraphs 129 and 130 of the State party's report, said that she would like to know what procedures the State party had followed during those investigations in order to verify the victims' ages. It would be helpful to learn whether investigations into other cases of abduction, forced marriage and forced conversion had resulted in the conviction of the perpetrators and, if so, how many convictions had there been and what penalties had been handed down.

40. She would appreciate a response from the delegation to allegations that members of the Ahmadi community had been prohibited from performing the ritual sacrifice of an animal during Eid al-Adha and had faced intimidation, arrest and legal action for attempting to do so. The delegation might also wish to comment on reports that Syed Ali Ahmad Tariq, a prominent Ahmadi lawyer, had been assaulted by other legal professionals and arrested under laws that denied members of his community the right to call themselves Muslims.

41. She would like to know what steps the State party had taken in law and in practice to ensure that the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan, which set out three phases for the return of undocumented Afghan nationals to their home country, provided for individual assessments of the risk of refoulement, in particular of Afghan women and children who were victims of trafficking or were at risk of prostitution, forced marriage, domestic servitude or sexual exploitation. It would be useful to learn what measures had been taken as part of the implementation of the Plan in order to protect the rights and best interests of all children without discrimination. Lastly, she would be grateful for the delegation's comments on reports that the implementation of the Plan in September 2023 had led to the return to Afghanistan of between 9,000 and 10,000 individuals each day and that approximately 26,000 undocumented individuals and 4,300 Afghan asylum-seekers had been arrested and detained that same year.

42. **A representative of Pakistan** said that cases involving abduction for the purpose of forced marriage were addressed under articles 365-B and 498-B of the Pakistan Penal Code. Victims' ages were determined using their computerized birth certificate, which could be obtained from the National Database and Registration Authority. Cases in which there were concerns that the victim was under 18 years old were referred to a medical board for verification. Once it had been confirmed that the victim was under 18, the courts could initiate proceedings under the Child Marriage Restraint Act. There were numerous examples of cases in which the courts had ordered the return of the victims to their parents.

43. Article 20 of the Constitution established that every citizen had the right to profess, practise and propagate his or her religion, subject to law. Article 298 of the Penal Code provided for the punishment of members of the Ahmadi community who referred to themselves as Muslims or engaged in acts that outraged Muslims. Given that such acts usually resulted in significant violence, the Government had decided to take action to prevent any serious incidents from occurring during the most recent celebration of Eid al-Adha and had been successful in doing so.

44. The agricultural sector played an essential role in the country, accounting for more than 22 per cent of gross domestic product and providing 37 per cent of job opportunities. The Land Information and Management System had been introduced in July 2023 to modernize and promote the sector. One of the initiatives launched under the System was the Green Pakistan Initiative, the objective of which was to support the reclamation of government land and barren land so that it could be used by the agricultural sector. The issue of compensation for individuals who had lost land because of that initiative was already being considered by the Lahore High Court.

45. **A representative of Pakistan** said that, although his country was not a signatory to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, the Government was committed to upholding the principle of non-refoulement and had demonstrated that commitment through a number of measures. The country was home to one of the largest groups of Afghan refugees in the world; the number of registered Afghan refugees currently stood at 1.35 million. Furthermore, it was estimated that more than 800,000 undocumented Afghans were also present in the country. The Government continued to work with United Nations agencies and local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support those refugees with services that were offered throughout the country and aimed to ensure that they could live in dignity and have access to the necessities that were essential for their well-being and integration into society. More than 600,000 Afghan refugees had been returned to Afghanistan since September 2023.

46. The National Database and Registration Authority worked with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to issue Afghan refugees with Proof of Registration cards that would guarantee their protection and their right to remain in Pakistan. The cards were renewable and also allowed refugees to register their children. Urban refugee support units had been set up by the Commissionerates for Afghan Refugees to help refugees obtain protection and deal with issues in areas such as health and education. Refugees wishing to receive an informal education could do so through community-based education and vocational training centres. Afghan refugee children were entitled to attend public schools or schools run specifically for them by NGOs and international organizations. The Government had reserved over 1,700 places for Afghan students in 32 public and private

schools across the country and had announced the creation of 10,500 scholarships, 6,000 of which had already been awarded, for such students. Scholarships were also available through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative, which was implemented by UNHCR. The overarching educational strategy of UNHCR was to facilitate access to public schools for Afghan refugee children, maximize resources and encourage peaceful coexistence between refugee and local children. UNHCR sought to direct its resources to improving existing facilities in areas housing refugees, thereby benefiting both the refugee and the local populations and contributing to social cohesion.

47. Afghan refugees had access to public health-care facilities and could receive treatment through programmes established specifically for them by NGOs and international organizations. Such programmes focused on areas such as maternal and child health and the treatment of chronic diseases. More than 85 per cent of Afghan women living in refugee villages were covered by reproductive health services. The Government had granted Afghan refugees access to the expanded programme on immunization and other preventive health programmes on tuberculosis and HIV. The Government's efforts were complemented by the work of UNHCR, which provided harm reduction services to drug users in Quetta, had established a state-of-the-art dialysis unit in that city and was in the process of building a cold chain vaccination storage facility in the city of Peshawar.

48. Providing refugees with employment opportunities was a priority for the Government. A number of organizations ran vocational training and skills development programmes to help refugees gain employment and had launched microfinance initiatives to promote their financial independence and economic stability. Activities aimed at improving refugees' self-sufficiency and economic capacity were organized by UNHCR with a view to facilitating their sustainable reintegration into Afghan society. In view of the fact that 32 per cent of Afghan refugees lived in rural villages, UNHCR had focused its efforts on providing them with seeds, fertilizer, agricultural tools, livestock and relevant training. It supported refugees in improving the quality of their products, establishing links with local and international markets and gaining access to financial institutions. While refugees continued to face obstacles in obtaining access to financial services, the establishment of community savings groups was considered a viable option that would enable refugee communities to create their own financial safety nets. UNHCR Pakistan would work with its Afghan counterpart to create cross-border livelihood support programmes with the aim of promoting the successful return of Afghan refugees to their country.

49. Hubs had been established in three cities to promote coexistence between refugees and the local communities hosting them. The hubs provided refugees and locals with educational and skills development courses, legal aid, psychosocial support and health services. Essentials such as food and hygiene kits were distributed by organizations including the World Food Programme and UNHCR, which also provided temporary shelter and supported the building and refurbishment of refugee accommodation. A programme had been implemented to address the political, socioeconomic, financial and environmental impact that the long-term hosting of refugees had had on local communities. Its objectives were to reduce that impact while ensuring the protection of Afghan refugees, enhancing community acceptance of them and promoting social cohesion.

50. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that she wished to know whether steps had been taken to provide compensation to the members of the Pashtun community from whom 6,000 acres of land had been seized. With regard to her earlier question on the treatment of members of the Ahmadi community, she would welcome an explanation from the delegation of how the decision to arrest members of that community for animal sacrifice was consistent with the freedom established in article 20 of the Constitution to profess, practise and propagate religion.

51. **Mr. Amir**, recalling the State party's long history of peaceful coexistence between different religions and ethnic groups, the example for which was set by the founding father of the country, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, said that it was of utmost importance for the country's leadership to draw inspiration from that vision to restore peace and harmony in modern-day Pakistan.

52. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that the Committee was concerned about the high maternal mortality rates in the State party, especially in rural areas and among low-caste, refugee and migrant women. The low level of education among rural women of reproductive age was one of the factors impacting maternal health. That and other structural problems needed to be acknowledged. Data collection on maternal mortality, disaggregated by ethnicity and migration status, would be critical. Did the State party disseminate health information to rural women to promote the use of health-care services?

53. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that, until the promulgation in Ordinance No. XX of 1984, which had made it a criminal offence for Ahmadis to identify themselves as Muslims, the Ahmadiyya had enjoyed the same rights as other Muslim denominations. He failed to understand the logic behind those changes, which had not been for the better. The treatment afforded to Ahmadiyya Muslims in the State party was indefensible and the authorities might wish to consider restoring the situation to its pre-1984 state.

54. **A representative of Pakistan** said that the example set by Muhammad Ali Jinnah continued to inspire the country's leadership. Despite the practical challenges to the implementation of the Convention, the Government shared the Committee's objectives and aspirations.

55. Since the Ahmadiyya were not recognized as Muslims under the Constitution, they were banned from practicing the ritual of Qurbani, which was one of the cornerstones of the Muslim faith. The delegation had taken note of the Committee's different views in that regard, which would be taken into consideration, but that was the situation currently.

56. The structural problems underlying uneven access to health-care services were related to development, not ethnicity or migration status. There was a rural-urban divide in availability of health services and poverty was an important barrier.

57. Turning to the issue of violence against members of the Ahmadiyya community, he said that the person who had shot and killed Ghulam Sawar and Rahat Ahmad Bajwah in June 2024 in Punjab Province had been arrested and placed in judicial custody. Following the destruction of the minaret of an Ahmadiyya place of worship in Sargodha district, 23 suspects had been identified and 5 had been arrested. The district government had taken steps to repair the place of worship. Additional details on those and other cases would be provided in writing.

58. The Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan was implemented in close consultation with United Nations human rights bodies, special representatives, special procedure mandate holders and UNHCR. While those entities had initially voiced concerns about the well-being and protection of the rights of Afghans returned to Afghanistan, the specific issue of trafficking in women and children had never come up. However, he would look into the matter and revert to the Committee with additional information.

59. The Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan aimed to facilitate the return of illegal migrants. Although many migrants in Pakistan were Afghan, it did not specifically target that population group. Initially, the Plan focused on the orderly repatriation of illegal, unregistered foreigners, persons who had overstayed their visa and persons holding false identity documents, with due respect for the country's international human rights obligations. A series of safeguards were in place at the federal and provincial levels to ensure compliance with those standards.

60. Pakistan had been hosting Afghan refugees for more than 40 years. The situation had changed with the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban on 15 August 2021 and the evacuation of Pakistani staff and Afghan support staff, in the wake of which many Afghan nationals had crossed the border illegally and had not been registered as refugees. Some 20,000 Afghan nationals had been promised resettlement in third countries and had received humanitarian safe passage exit permits. However, only 30 per cent of those resettlements had actually been implemented, partly as a result of challenges arising in prospective host countries in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In principle, the hosting and management of refugees was a shared responsibility, but currently Pakistan carried the bulk of the burden, which gave rise to a series of political and social challenges. Pakistan had not closed its borders to Afghan nationals, but merely asked migrants to provide the requisite

documentation and enter lawfully. The Government and people of Pakistan had gone well beyond their obligations under international law and had made space for Afghan nationals in their territory, their economy, their society and their hearts.

61. To date, over 505,000 foreigners had been repatriated: 272,000 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province; 148,000 from Balochistan Province; over 23,000 from Punjab Province; 68,000 from Sindh Province; and about 160 from the Islamabad Capital Territory. Additional statistics would be provided in writing. The repatriation process was closely supervised by UNHCR; following a visit by the High Commissioner for Refugees to Pakistan in July 2024, Proof of Registration cards had been extended for one year.

62. There was no racial profiling of any ethnic group in Pakistan.

63. In connection with the attacks on a Christian community and churches following accusations of desecration of the Qur'an in Jaranwala city, Punjab Province, in 2023, 22 first information reports had been filed, 220 of the accused remained on remand and 41 had been released. Ten joint investigation teams had been set up and one person had been arrested on charges of inciting the violence. A total of 22 churches had been rebuilt and renovated, provided with furniture, fixtures and security cameras, and the district administration had built a wall around the Christian graveyard and four churches still under renovation. Compensation in the amount of 2 million Pakistan rupees had been paid to 80 families.

64. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he was grateful for the cooperative spirit and frankness that characterized the delegation's dialogue with the Committee. Despite diverging views on certain issues, there was clearly a shared vision.

65. **A representative of Pakistan** said that her delegation greatly appreciated the constructive engagement with the Committee. As one of the first signatories to the Convention and home to a diverse, multi-ethnic, multilingual, multireligious and multicultural population, Pakistan had never faltered in its commitment to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, drawing strength from its diversity.

66. However, racial discrimination did not only result from misguided ideas of racial superiority, it could also arise in a context of scarce resources and abundant challenges. In Pakistan, acute challenges of underdevelopment, debt and pressing issues of food security, education and health care for a growing population were compounded by the disproportionate impact of climate change. In addition, the country had to contend with technological transformation, the impact of disinformation and the propagation of hatred and intolerance on social media, which undermined the Government's efforts to foster inclusion and harmony. The geopolitical winds were shifting as discrimination and hatred were mainstreamed across the globe. But the Government was steadfast in its commitment to non-discrimination and equality and would work humbly to tackle practical issues in order to improve people's lives. In those difficult times, her delegation was grateful for the Committee's candid engagement and looked forward to further cooperation with it.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.