



General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 January 2026

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Sixty-first session

23 February–2 April 2026

Agenda items 2 and 3

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 55/15. It contains information on relevant developments in 2025 of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms and on the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that contribute to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The High Commissioner concludes that further steps are needed by States to recognize minorities as a group at risk of being left behind and to renew efforts to implement the Declaration, including by enacting comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and ensuring the meaningful participation of minorities in decision-making processes.



I. Introduction

1. On 4 April 2024, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 55/15 on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, in which it requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to present an annual report on relevant developments of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms and on the activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at headquarters and in the field that contribute to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

2. In the same resolution, the Human Rights Council urged States to take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against minorities and to promote their full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of public life. In the resolution, the need to address multiple, aggravated and intersecting forms of discrimination, including those based on race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender and disability, is highlighted, as is advancing the development and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and policies. The Council encouraged States to ratify and accede and adhere to relevant international instruments that protect minority rights.

3. The year 2025 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, representing an important milestone in the global commitment to combat racism and promote equality. Adopted in 1965, the Convention was the first core international human rights treaty and remains a cornerstone in the protection of minority rights. To commemorate this occasion, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination led a collaborative year-long campaign with United Nations anti-racism mechanisms and minority rights bodies, encouraging States, civil society and other stakeholders to engage in initiatives that reaffirm the Convention's enduring relevance and renew the global commitment to a world free from racial discrimination.¹

4. In March, United Nations experts warned that 60 years of progress since the adoption of the Convention were at risk, due to the increasing instrumentalization of racism and xenophobia in political discourse. They emphasized that racial discrimination remained deeply entrenched, disproportionately affecting minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African and Asian descent, migrants and refugees. They urged States to end impunity, prevent hate speech and algorithmic bias and engage meaningfully with reparatory justice and United Nations anti-racism mechanisms.²

5. Also in March, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, Free & Equal, the United Nations campaign for equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other people with sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics that are perceived not to conform to social norms (LGBTIQ+ people), launched the social media initiative entitled "The fight to end racism must involve all of us". The campaign featured quote cards highlighting LGBTIQ+ and Indigenous and racial minority human rights defenders from around the world, short video clips and a human interest story, calling upon allies to stand up against racism and discrimination.³

6. At the regional level, in March the OHCHR Regional Office for South America organized two virtual activities with civil society to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and 60 years since of the adoption of the Convention. The events were aimed at renewing regional commitment to eradicating racist ideas and practices and included a seminar with experts and a dialogue focused on the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to Ecuador.

¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cerd/60th-anniversary-international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial-discrimination.

² See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/03/sixty-years-progress-risk-time-stop-instrumentalising-racism-and.

³ See www.unfe.org/updates/the-fight-to-end-racism-must-involve-all-of-us.

The discussions highlighted the importance of the Convention and encouraged civil society to participate in the review processes for the Convention, emphasizing the role of minority voices in shaping anti-discrimination efforts in the region.⁴

7. In June, the OHCHR Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa organized an online training with the Regional Network for Development and Anti-Racism in the Middle East and North Africa and other civil society organizations from the region. The training contributed to advancing the Office's outreach efforts on racial discrimination and the implementation of the Convention.

II. Activities and developments contributing to the promotion of and respect for the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

A. OHCHR engagement at the global, regional and country levels

8. In 2025, the High Commissioner raised the issue of minority rights in his public statements in relation to several countries.⁵ In his statement at the eighteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, the High Commissioner drew attention to the fact that, worldwide, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities remained disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Police violence against minorities had become distressingly common. He noted, furthermore, that vilifying minorities had become a convenient divide and rule tactic for leaders seeking to polarize, confuse and distract from their own failures. The High Commissioner called upon States to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, ensure the meaningful inclusion of minorities, integrate human rights education into all levels of curriculum, protect minority rights defenders and develop reliable, disaggregated data systems to strengthen accountability and informed policymaking.⁶

9. The provision of support for enacting comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and improving data in this area remained a priority for OHCHR. Since the launch of the guidelines entitled *Protecting Minority Rights: A Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation*,⁷ in 2022, OHCHR and the non-governmental organization Equal Rights Trust have supported reform efforts at the national level and conducted extensive mapping of equality law reforms worldwide. As of 2025, less than a quarter of the world's countries had enacted anti-discrimination laws that met the minimum standards required under international law.⁸ At the end of the reporting period, in more than 20 countries, active debates and reform initiatives were under way to strengthen national legal frameworks in line with international human rights obligations.

10. In July 2025, OHCHR, jointly with the Equal Rights Trust and the Berkeley Center on Comparative Equality and Anti-Discrimination Law, launched the Equality for All

⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/events/events/2025/un-human-rights-south-america-regional-office-organized-activities-civil-society.

⁵ See, for example, www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/03/turbulence-and-unpredictability-amid-growing-conflict-and-divided; www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/16-june-hc-global-update-hrc59-trilingual.pdf; and www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/2025-09-08-hc-global-update-3-languages%20.pdf.

⁶ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/11/high-commissioner-turk-un-minority-forum-diversity-renewable-energy.

⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/protecting-minority-rights-practical-guide.

⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/11/high-commissioner-turk-un-minority-forum-diversity-renewable-energy.

Academic Action Alliance,⁹ a network of university institutions committed to advancing equality law reform at the national level. The Alliance was developed following extensive consultations with academic researchers and law professors in 2024 and 2025 and in follow up to the publication of the *Practical Guide*.

11. Since 2022, OHCHR has organized the International Contest for Minority Artists annually, in partnership with Freemuse, Minority Rights Group, the City of Geneva and the International School of Geneva.¹⁰ The contest is aimed at supporting minority artists worldwide who are actively engaged in defending human rights. The fourth edition of the contest was held in 2025 on the theme “Belonging, place and loss”. In November, the laureates visited Geneva for a week of activities on art and human rights, including an awards ceremony and participation in the Forum on Minority Issues. Their work was showcased in a six-week public exhibition hosted at the International School of Geneva.

12. In the Central African Republic, OHCHR continued providing technical and financial support during the reporting period to the Consortium on Minorities and the Fight against Discrimination, a civil society coalition focused on strengthening member capacities in minority rights protection, data collection, monitoring and reporting. Those efforts led to the development by the Consortium of a joint advocacy report addressed to national authorities and their partners and a strategic action plan. OHCHR also supported the High Authority for Good Governance in reinforcing its mandate to promote transparency, equity and the protection of vulnerable and minority groups, with a focus on underrepresented communities, such as the Fulani and Pygmy peoples and persons with albinism.

13. The OHCHR Regional Office for Europe enhanced the capacity of 20 staff members from 13 equality bodies in European Union member States to engage effectively with United Nations human rights mechanisms and to record human rights violations for the purposes of generating evidence through indicators, in line with the Council of the European Union Directive on standards for equality bodies.

14. In June, amendments to the legislation on citizenship were adopted in Ukraine. The amendments permit multiple citizenships and update the rules on acquisition and loss of Ukrainian citizenship. At the draft stages of the legislation, OHCHR, through the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, raised concerns that certain provisions risked depriving residents of occupied territory of their Ukrainian citizenship. The final version addressed that concern by explicitly providing that the acquisition of citizenship of the Russian Federation in occupied territory was not to be considered “voluntary”.¹¹

15. In September, in his statement at the High-Level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, the High Commissioner warned that the situation of minorities, in particular the Rohingya, had reached unprecedented levels of suffering and insecurity, especially in Rakhine State. Other minority groups, such as the ethnic Rakhine, Mro, Maramagyi, Hindu and Kaman, had also been severely affected by the escalating conflict. The High Commissioner called for urgent international action, stressing that peace efforts needed to address the root causes of the conflict, including the persecution of the Rohingya and other minorities that had entrenched divisions and fuelled conflict for decades across Myanmar.¹²

B. Activities of United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms

16. In 2025, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review adopted reports on 41 countries and issued recommendations on minority rights for the majority of those reviewed. The recommendations included the following: to accelerate the process for the adoption of comprehensive legislation to protect minority communities and effectively

⁹ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/minorities/brochure-alliance-october-2025.pdf.

¹⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/minority-artists-voice-and-dissidence.

¹¹ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/a-hrc-61-crp3.pdf.

¹² See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/09/high-commissioner-turk-rohingya-conference-international-community.

combat all forms of discrimination; to intensify efforts to promote social inclusion by developing programmes that support the integration of minority groups into education, employment and healthcare systems, ensuring equal opportunities for all; to take measures to combat discrimination and violence against religious or belief minorities; to step up efforts to address hate speech online and violence against members of vulnerable groups, including minorities; and to ensure the adequate representation of ethnic minorities in political bodies and decision-making positions, including through positive measures.¹³

17. In February, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern over the systematic targeting of the Baloch minority in Pakistan under the guise of counter-terrorism operations. They emphasized that counter-terrorism measures must comply with international human rights standards and should not be used to suppress minority voices or civil society.¹⁴ Further concerns were raised in a communication sent in May 2025 over the arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and mistreatment of Baloch Yakjehti Committee members.¹⁵

18. In March, United Nations human rights experts raised the alarm about escalating violence, hate speech and blasphemy charges targeting religious minorities in Pakistan, in particular the Ahmadiyya and Christian communities. The violence included attacks on places of worship and burial sites, arbitrary arrests and the criminalization of peaceful religious expression. The experts urged Pakistan to repeal or amend blasphemy laws in line with its international human rights obligations and to ensure protection for religious minorities from incitement to violence and discrimination.¹⁶

19. In April, United Nations human rights experts raised concerns about the persistent and systemic discrimination faced by members of the Baha'i minority in Egypt. They noted that, despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, Baha'is continued to be denied official recognition as persons before the law, resulting in violations of their rights to equal recognition before the law, to marry, to freedom of religion or belief and to freely to participate in the cultural life of the community. The experts urged Egypt to amend existing legislation to ensure equal protection under the law for all religious or belief minorities and to eliminate discriminatory practices.¹⁷

20. In June 2025, United Nations human rights experts welcomed the Karnataka Rohith Vemula (prevention of exclusion or injustice/right to education and dignity) draft act as a significant step towards addressing caste-based discrimination in higher education in India. However, they expressed concern that the draft lacked explicit protections for the Dalit and Adivasi minorities, who remained disproportionately affected by systemic exclusion, harassment and barriers to academic advancement. The experts urged the government to include clear definitions of direct and indirect discrimination, in line with international standards, and recommended shifting from a punitive to a preventive and restorative approach, including by introducing grievance and redress mechanisms, whistle-blower protections and institutional accountability.¹⁸

21. In its concluding observations on the seventh periodic report submitted by Spain pursuant to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in July, the Human Rights Committee expressed its concern about persistent discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, notably the Gitano community, people of African descent and

¹³ See www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation.

¹⁴ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29607>.

¹⁵ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29968>.

¹⁶ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29790>.

¹⁷ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29803>; and the Government's response,

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=39037>.

¹⁸ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30013>.

migrants, and about reports of racial profiling by security forces. The Committee regretted delays in adopting a law against racism and the lack of transparency in accountability mechanisms. It urged Spain to expedite the adoption of the law against racism, to explicitly prohibit racial profiling in legislation and to ensure transparency and training for law enforcement.¹⁹

22. In July, United Nations human rights experts raised concerns over events of physical violence causing death by vigilante groups in India, groups which were allegedly, disproportionately targeting the minority Muslim community. They noted that those acts, often carried out with impunity, were reportedly enabled by state-level cow protection laws that shifted the burden of proof to the accused and had been misused to justify violence. The experts recalled that it was the responsibility of States to exercise due diligence to prevent, punish, investigate and redress the harm caused by non-State actors and to bring perpetrators to justice.²⁰

23. In her report to the General Assembly issued in August, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed concern over the systemic discrimination and repression faced by ethnic and religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Afghans, Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baha'is, Balouch, Christians, Kurds and Yarsan. She highlighted the disproportionate impact of the death penalty on minorities, with Baloch and Kurdish individuals overrepresented in executions for drug and security-related offences, respectively. She appealed to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure equal treatment before the law without distinction on the basis of, inter alia, ethnicity or religion, to end the targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, to reinstate legal documentation for undocumented minorities and to guarantee access to public services.²¹ The concerns raised by the Special Rapporteur were echoed by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran.²²

24. In September, in her report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation noted the expansion of a State-sponsored nationalist ideology that had normalized identity-based discrimination and violence, including against ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples. In her recommendations, inter alia, she called upon the Russian authorities to end the targeting of Indigenous Peoples' and national minorities' organizations and advocates with "extremist" and "terrorist" designations.²³

25. In October, the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic expressed alarm over the targeting and victimization of ethnic and religious minorities amid renewed violence in the country, referring to the situation of the Alawi community. He highlighted the forced displacement of Druze and Bedouin communities and warned of rising hate speech and intercommunal mistrust. He called for urgent accountability, inclusive dialogue and justice to prevent further violence and to rebuild trust between the interim authorities and the diverse communities of the Syrian Arab Republic.²⁴

26. In October, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan expressed concern over the persistent discrimination and marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities. He noted violations affecting the Hazara, Ismaili Shia, Turkmen and Uzbek communities, including forced conversions, pressure to conform to Sunni education and land dispossession through land claims, which were often enforced through threats and violence. The Special Rapporteur called for the adoption of housing, land and property rights protocols that included safeguards for minorities and displaced persons and urged the

¹⁹ [CCPR/C/ESP/CO/7](#), paras. 12 and 13.

²⁰ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30104>.

²¹ [A/80/349](#), paras. 24, 32, 35–38, 45–48 and 50 (o), (p) and (s).

²² See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/iran-un-fact-finding-mission-alarmed-surge-repression-and-extraordinary?sub-site=HRC.

²³ [A/HRC/60/59](#), paras. 3, 137 and 141 (l).

²⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/future-syria-balance-un-commission-sounds-alarm-renewed-violence-amid-hopes.

Government to take steps to allow for the meaningful participation of minority and marginalized groups in shaping the country's future.²⁵

27. In relation to the conflict in the Sudan, in October, a group of United Nations human rights experts expressed concern in particular regarding women and girls from ethnic minority groups, who bore the brunt of conflict-related sexual violence.²⁶

28. In December, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues conducted an official visit to Nepal and noted in his end of mission statement the need to close the gap between constitutional and legislative provisions and their meaningful implementation to prohibit discrimination against persons belonging to minorities, including Dalits, effectively. The Special Rapporteur welcomed the draft of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law and encouraged its swift adoption.²⁷

29. Also in December, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance conducted an official visit to Austria. In her end of mission statement, she expressed concern about multiple forms of racism and their impact on minority communities, such as Africans and people of African descent, Jewish people, Muslims, people of Arab descent, Roma, Palestinians, Asians and people of Asian descent. The Special Rapporteur commended Austria for having legal protections and for its measures taken to address discrimination, noting that additional steps were needed to step up anti-racism efforts.²⁸

C. Human rights of Roma communities

30. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR continued to strengthen the Roma community mediators' system in Transnistria, which was first piloted in 2021. By the end of 2025, over 1,900 marginalized Roma living in six Roma-populated localities had gained improved access to human rights and essential public services, such as education, health, social protection, employment, vocational training, child support services, housing and identity documents. With OHCHR support, Roma mediators piloted a contingency fund that facilitated documentation for the most vulnerable Roma families, including refugees from Ukraine, helping them to obtain citizenship and national identity documents for the first time, thereby reducing barriers to services.

31. In March, in its concluding observations on the second periodic report submitted by Montenegro pursuant to the Covenant, the Human Rights Committee noted with concern the continued marginalization of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. While acknowledging some progress, the Committee noted that those groups still faced challenges in access to adequate housing, had limited access to formal employment and recorded low secondary school completion rates. The Committee also highlighted their underrepresentation in political life. It urged Montenegro to intensify efforts to combat discrimination, ensure sustainable integration into the public administration and amend electoral legislation to enhance the political participation of those minority groups.²⁹

32. In April, OHCHR and partners launched the Romani Memory Map for the Americas, a collective, crowdsourced initiative led by OHCHR in partnership with academic institutions, Romani human rights defenders and civil society organizations. The project is aimed at advancing knowledge of the Romani presence in the Americas and strengthening efforts to memorialize both the positive contributions of Roma to society and the patterns and practices of human rights abuses rooted in antigypsyism. A new call for submissions of proposed memory points for the map was also launched.³⁰

²⁵ A/80/432, paras. 1, 62, 64, 85, 86, 103 (d) (iii) and (e) and 104 (c).

²⁶ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/un-experts-demand-urgent-action-protect-civilians-sudan-conflict-intensifies.

²⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/nepal-un-expert-says-minorities-and-dalits-must-be-empowered-fulfill-their.

²⁸ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/austria-must-scale-anti-racism-measures-un-expert.

²⁹ CCPR/C/MNE/CO/2, paras. 18 and 19.

³⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-romani-memory-map-americas.

33. In May, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports submitted by Ukraine under the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination welcomed the adoption of the strategy for promoting the realization of the rights and opportunities of persons belonging to the Roma national minority and related action plans. However, it expressed its concern about the persistent social exclusion of Roma communities, negative stereotypes, low school attendance and high dropout rates among Roma children and the disproportionate impact of the ongoing armed conflict on Roma communities. The Committee urged Ukraine to review its policy framework on Roma communities, allocate adequate resources for its implementation, ensure access to education and social services, register undocumented Roma and adopt measures to combat stereotypes and promote inclusion.³¹

34. In October, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern over forced evictions and housing demolitions in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, a World Heritage site of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They noted that the evictions, which displaced over 1,200 residents, primarily members of the Multoni minority, a local Roma community, were carried out without consultation, resettlement planning or adequate compensation. The experts warned that such actions amounted to discrimination and cultural erasure, calling upon UNESCO, its Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the Uzbek authorities to uphold human rights standards in heritage conservation.³²

D. Hate speech against minorities

35. In January, OHCHR participated in the conference entitled “Empower talk: standing against hate and embracing rights” hosted jointly by the Government of Albania and the University of Essex in Tirana. The conference culminated in the adoption of the Tirana Framework for Confronting Intolerance,³³ in which participants called upon Governments, private sector actors and civil society organizations to examine the role of education, speech countering and in response to hate speech, emerging technologies and legal tools, including existing frameworks, such as the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights,³⁴ in addressing hate speech online and offline. The Framework also included a call for building multi-sector alliances to collaboratively combat intolerance, including antisemitism, Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hate and prejudice against Christian minorities and other religious or belief minorities. Participants called upon technology and social media companies to establish clear, transparent mechanisms to identify and address hate speech while respecting freedom of expression.

36. In January, March and June 2025, OHCHR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in cooperation with the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, organized a series of hybrid webinars on crafting pathways to more peaceful, inclusive and just societies. At those peer-to-peer learning events, participants explored the role of parliamentarians, social media platforms and faith-based actors in navigating freedom of expression and hate speech, digital challenges to peace, inclusion and human rights and alternatives to legislation when combating hatred against religious or belief minorities.

37. In February, the High Commissioner delivered a statement at the conference on the role and responsibility of religious leaders in times of war, atrocities and polarization organized by Wilton Park in partnership with the British Embassy to the Holy See and Globethics, in association with OHCHR. The High Commissioner stressed that discrimination, incitement to hatred and violence against Muslims, Jews, Christians and persons belonging to religious minorities were rising across the globe, both online and offline. Those trends, he noted, were often fuelled by politicians, business leaders, media commentators and others drawing from a deep well of historic hatred, atrocity crimes,

³¹ CERD/C/UKR/CO/24-26, paras. 21–24.

³² See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/uzbekistan-and-unesco-must-address-forced-evictions-world-heritage-sites.

³³ See www.legal-tools.org/doc/kvj8a9uq/pdf.

³⁴ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/press/Faith4Rights.pdf.

paranoia and conspiracy theories based on religious ideas. He underscored that, in such a highly charged environment, religious leaders and people of faith had a special and direct responsibility to resist manipulation and to play a positive role by promoting mediation, fostering healing and seeking common ground.³⁵

38. In December, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth periodic reports submitted by Sweden under the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern about the widespread racist hate speech and hate crimes and of the dissemination of negative stereotypes of members of groups protected under the Convention, in particular ethnic and ethno-religious groups, including Muslim ethno-religious groups, Roma communities, people of African and Asian descent, Sami People and non-citizens, including in the media, on the Internet and in social media. The Committee recommended, *inter alia*, that Sweden expedite the review of its legislative framework to prohibit organizations or groups that incited and promoted racial hatred and to combat all forms of racist hate speech and hate crimes targeting ethnic and ethno-religious groups.³⁶

E. Economic, social and cultural rights of minorities

39. In February, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern over reports of school attacks, forced displacement and exclusionary practices hindering access for Muslim minority children to quality education in the Central African Republic. The experts urged the Government of the Central African Republic to uphold its international human rights obligations, ensure free and inclusive education for all children, rebuild damaged infrastructure, investigate violations and hold perpetrators accountable.³⁷

40. In his report to the General Assembly, issued in July, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence emphasized the urgent need to integrate economic, social and cultural rights into transitional justice processes, in particular to address the structural injustices faced by marginalized communities. The Special Rapporteur stressed that ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups often suffered disproportionately from violations, such as land dispossession, cultural suppression and denial of access to essential services. He called for truth-seeking mechanisms to explicitly investigate and document those violations, which were often compounded by intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination, and for reparations to be tailored to the specific harms experienced by those communities. He urged States to adopt inclusive, victim-centred approaches that reflected intersecting identities, recognizing that sustainable peace was unattainable without addressing the root causes of exclusion and inequality.³⁸

41. In October, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern over the increasing criminalization of cultural expression, artistic creativity and academic work among Uighur and other minority groups in China.³⁹ They highlighted cases involving imprisonment and enforced disappearance linked to cultural activities, emphasizing that cultural rights, including the right to artistic freedom, academic expression and the use of one's language, were integral to the full enjoyment of human rights. The experts expressed concern over the use of broad and ambiguous counter-extremism laws, which appeared to be used to curtail minority cultural and religious expression. The experts stressed that the cultural expression of minorities must never be conflated with extremism or terrorism.⁴⁰

³⁵ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/02/religious-leaders-must-work-together-promote-shared-principles.

³⁶ [CERD/C/SWE/CO/24-25](#), paras. 12 and 13.

³⁷ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29639>.

³⁸ [A/80/175](#), paras. 31, 51, 54, 55 and 60.

³⁹ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/un-experts-urge-china-end-repression-uyghur-and-cultural-expression.

⁴⁰ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29740>.

42. In December, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports submitted by New Zealand under the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern about the persistent racial stereotypes that continued to affect social cohesion and undermine respect for cultural diversity. The Committee recommended that New Zealand intensify efforts to prevent and counter those stereotypes, including through the revision of educational curricula at all levels to promote intercultural dialogue, respect for ethnic and cultural diversity and understanding of diverse histories, such as by incorporating the history and legacies of colonialism, as well as the linguistic identities and cultural heritage of Māori, Pacific peoples, migrants, refugees and other ethnic communities, including those of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American descent.⁴¹

43. Also in December, in its concluding observations on the combined twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports submitted by Tunisia under the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination welcomed the revocation of a 1965 circular restricting the registration of Amazigh names for newborns but expressed its concern over persistent refusals by some municipalities to register Amazigh names and structural discrimination affecting the Amazigh ethnic minority group. The Committee highlighted barriers to education in Tamazight and noted limited access to employment, healthcare and housing. It urged Tunisia to implement the 2020 circular allowing the registration of Amazigh names effectively, take special measures to combat the marginalization faced by the Amazigh ethnic minority and ensure their access to education in their mother tongue, employment, healthcare and housing.⁴²

F. Data and data-driven technologies

44. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR provided expert support to the National Bureau of Statistics and advocated for the systematic inclusion of data disaggregated by ethnicity, language and religion in national surveys. From September to December, in partnership with the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OHCHR delivered a comprehensive capacity-building programme for the National Bureau of Statistics on minority rights and disaggregated data collection.

45. In September, in his statement delivered during high-level week, the High Commissioner warned that data-driven technologies, including artificial intelligence, could perpetuate and deepen discrimination and inequality, in particular for those who were already marginalized. He highlighted that predictive policing tools used to flag future crimes and likely suspects were reproducing historical bias against racial, ethnic and religious minorities. The High Commissioner urged States to implement robust legal frameworks to ensure that artificial intelligence systems were safe, transparent and accountable and to take specific action on equality and non-discrimination, data protection, privacy and access to information, building digital systems that respected human dignity and complied with human rights standards.⁴³

G. Empowerment and participation

46. The Minorities Fellowship Programme, a key component of the efforts of OHCHR to mainstream minority issues and strengthen the capacity of minority rights advocates, marked its twentieth anniversary in 2025. In November, the Programme welcomed 19 fellows from seventeen countries, offering them the opportunity to deepen their understanding of United Nations human rights instruments and enhance their advocacy skills to better use international human rights standards and mechanisms. The Programme included a one-week

⁴¹ CERD/C/NZL/CO/23-24, paras. 51 and 52.

⁴² CERD/C/TUN/CO/20-22, paras. 21 and 22.

⁴³ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/09/high-commissioner-turk-building-fair-digital-future.

preparatory course in Bolzano/Bozen, Italy, organized jointly with the Institute for Minority Rights at Eurac Research. The fellows also participated in the Forum on Minority Issues.

47. At the eighteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues,⁴⁴ participants sought to highlight the vital role minorities play in fostering stable, resilient and peaceful societies, as well as the positive contributions of minorities through their unique characteristics, perspectives and differences. They also examined the challenges that continued to hinder their full participation and empowerment. The Forum provided a platform for exploring best practices at the local, national, regional and international levels, showcasing how minority communities actively promoted multilayered identities, advanced social justice and strengthened societal resilience.

48. In its report on the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka, submitted to the Human Rights Council in August, OHCHR drew attention to the entrenched ethnic discrimination and continued marginalization of minority communities, in particular Tamils, Muslims and Malaiyaha Tamils. OHCHR noted that empowering and ensuring the participation of minorities in Sri Lanka required constitutional, legal and institutional reforms that guaranteed equality, the devolution of political and administrative power to local levels and the creation of an enabling environment for transitional justice through inclusive consultations and confidence-building measures. Those steps were deemed essential to dismantling structural ethnic discrimination and fostering inclusive governance and national unity.⁴⁵

H. Linguistic minorities

49. The United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia supported civil society actors and community representatives in promoting minority languages and advocating for linguistic diversity. It worked with the Baydari Organisation for the Protection of Rights of Minorities in Somalia and community leaders to translate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into Baydari, spoken by the Madhibaan community, a minority group facing descent-based discrimination. The initiative enabled linguistic minorities to gain access to information about their rights in their own languages.

50. In May, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about barriers to education in minority languages in Kyrgyzstan. While the Law on Education and the Law on the State Language guaranteed multilingual education, the Committee noted the absence of measures to ensure education in their mother tongues for ethnic minorities, including Uzbeks and other groups. The Committee urged the Government to implement reforms to guarantee access to education in minority languages.⁴⁶

51. Also in May, in its concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports submitted by Ukraine under the Convention, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted the adoption of the Law on National Minorities and the Unity in Diversity programme, aimed at promoting equality and protecting the civil, political, social, economic, cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic minorities. However, it expressed concern about discriminatory provisions affecting ethnic and ethno-linguistic minority groups whose languages were not official languages of the European Union, inconsistent access to education for minorities in their mother tongues and the temporary suspension of rights, including to peaceful assembly, for some ethnic minority groups. The Committee urged Ukraine to review its Law on National Minorities and subsequent amendments to repeal discriminatory provisions, ensure equal access to education in their mother tongues for all ethnic and ethno-linguistic minorities and rescind restrictions on their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.⁴⁷

52. In July, in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report submitted by Latvia under the Covenant, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern that the amendments made to education legislation, which were aimed at transitioning all instruction

⁴⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2025/eighteenth-session-forum-minority-issues.

⁴⁵ [A/HRC/60/21](#), paras. 9, 21, 22, 27, 28, 57, 58 and 63.

⁴⁶ [CERD/C/KGZ/CO/11-12](#), paras. 31 and 32.

⁴⁷ [CERD/C/UKR/CO/24-26](#), paras. 19 and 20.

in public schools to the Latvian language, could result in indirect discrimination against linguistic minorities. It also observed that requiring paid pre-election materials to be in Latvian might hinder minority participation in elections. The Committee urged Latvia to monitor the effects of the transition to Latvian as the language of instruction on linguistic minorities, to raise awareness about education programmes in minority languages and to promote the participation of minorities in electoral processes.⁴⁸

53. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) promoted language rights and multilingualism throughout the year by supporting the implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages at the central and municipal levels. UNMIK facilitated the hiring of Romani translators in two municipalities, enhancing access to services for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. The Mission's human rights component also provided training to 22 Romani translators from eight municipalities and courts, enhancing their interpretation skills. The Mission also supported Albanian and Serbian language courses for the police, research on the cultural rights of minority communities and joint advocacy between the Office of the Ombudsperson and the Office of the Language Commissioner.

I. Religious or belief minorities and faith actors

54. In January, in a video message marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, the High Commissioner stated that antisemitism was rampant, with Jews facing increased intimidation, threats and physical violence. He warned of the dangers posed by the manipulation of language, disinformation, incitement to hatred and identity politics.⁴⁹ On the same day, in an address to the European Parliament, the High Commissioner emphasized that upgrading efforts to combat antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other forms of hate speech was an essential step towards building inclusive societies.⁵⁰

55. In his statement to commemorate the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, in March, the High Commissioner stressed that Muslims continued to face prejudice and oppression that, in its most extreme forms, translated into violence, as well as socioeconomic exclusion, with unequal and unjust immigration policies, religious profiling, unwarranted surveillance and arbitrary detention. He warned that such hatred manifested itself in racism, antisemitism and religious discrimination of all kinds, including through hateful rhetoric and the deliberate misrepresentation of certain groups. He expressed alarm at how religious differences had been weaponized and manipulated for political gain. The High Commissioner urged States to develop comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and institutions and to prosecute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.⁵¹

56. In April, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief conducted an official visit to Zambia and, in her end of mission statement, raised concerns about what she described as limited understanding and protection of religious or belief minorities. She noted that, while the Constitution of Zambia affirmed religious diversity, the declaration of the country as a "Christian nation" had contributed to indirect discrimination against non-Christian groups. The Special Rapporteur recommended strengthening legal protections, promoting inclusive policies and ensuring reasonable accommodation.⁵²

57. In July, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern over amended law on the regulation of traditions and ceremonies of Tajikistan, which imposed restrictions on cultural and religious expression. The law banned clothing deemed "alien to national culture", prohibited children from participating in Muslim holiday celebrations and limited the scale and scope of traditional ceremonies, such as weddings and hajj-related festivities.

⁴⁸ [CCPR/C/LVA/CO/4](#), paras. 47 and 48.

⁴⁹ See <https://europe.ohchr.org/index.php/resources/speeches/message-international-day-commemoration-memory-victims>.

⁵⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/01/hc-brussels-europe-has-opportunity-advance-human-rights-home-and.

⁵¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/03/turk-islamophobia-weakens-our-societies-and-damages-everyone.

⁵² See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/04/going-beyond-complacency-required-uphold-freedom-religion-or-belief-zambia.

The experts emphasized that vague and stigmatizing language in the law risked arbitrary enforcement and disproportionately affected religious minorities and women. They urged Tajikistan to reconsider the law and ensure that any restrictions on rights were consistent with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality and were not discriminatory on the basis of religion, culture, gender or belief.⁵³

58. In its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report submitted by Viet Nam under the Covenant, adopted in July, the Human Rights Committee expressed its deep concern about the increasing discrimination, harassment and intimidation of religious minorities in Viet Nam, including Montagnard and Hmong Protestants, Khmer Krom Buddhists, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. It noted that the Law on Religion and Belief and related decrees imposed undue restrictions through mandatory registration and vague national security provisions and that counter-terrorism laws were applied to target those groups. The Committee urged Viet Nam to guarantee freedom of religion and belief, in line with article 18 of the Covenant, to prevent undue interference and to ensure objective registration criteria.⁵⁴

59. In August and December, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern over legislative, judicial and administrative measures in Estonia that appeared to target the Estonian Orthodox Church, a minority religious community affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate. Those measures included the adoption of the Churches and Congregations (Amendment) Act in June 2025, which introduced broad restrictions on religious associations with foreign affiliations that were deemed to be a national security threat. The experts warned that such actions might amount to institutionalized religious discrimination and violated multiple provisions of the Covenant. They emphasized that national security could not be invoked to restrict internal religious belief or peaceful canonical affiliation and called upon Estonia to suspend enforcement of the Act, refrain from further punitive actions against the Estonian Orthodox Church and ensure equal treatment of all religious communities under international human rights law.⁵⁵

60. In October, United Nations human rights experts expressed concern that, in Ukraine, allegations regarding the ecclesiastical and canonical links of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Moscow Patriarchate were being used to restrict the scope of freedom of worship and religious practice. They emphasized that freedom of religion was a non-derogable right, even during armed conflict, and highlighted serious concerns with the law on the protection of constitutional order in the sphere of activities of religious organizations, which allowed for the dissolution of religious organizations that maintained an affiliation with the Moscow Patriarchate, stating that equating religious ties with national security threats created a framework for State control incompatible with international norms. They urged the Government of Ukraine to review the law, halt legal actions targeting clergy, human rights defenders and journalists and ensure that freedom of religion was upheld, even in times of conflict.⁵⁶

61. In October, OHCHR contributed to the Global Ethics Forum by presenting at a round table on multi-stakeholder diplomacy, where it highlighted the importance of inclusive dialogue in countering polarization and promoting human dignity.⁵⁷ Members of the Faith for Rights community of practice shared experiences on leveraging the ethical and spiritual influence of religious leaders to challenge narratives of dehumanization and resist the instrumentalization of religion and belief. Building on a series of peer-to-peer learning events

⁵³ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30168>.

⁵⁴ CCPR/C/VNM/CO/4, paras. 44 and 45.

⁵⁵ See

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30183>; and the Government's response, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=39268>. See also www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/un-experts-concerned-escalating-legislative-and-administrative-measures.

⁵⁶ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/ukraine-un-experts-warn-persecution-against-ukrainian-orthodox-church.

⁵⁷ See <https://globethics.net/gef2025-changing-narrative-preparing-peace-multistakeholder-dialogue-and-plan-action>.

organized by OHCHR at Wilton Park and in Geneva and Rome, the Forum laid the groundwork for a white paper in which key lessons were consolidated and recommendations and commitments were made to foster cohesive societies through rights-based and values-driven narratives and to combat hatred against religious or belief minorities.

62. In October, OHCHR organized the sixth annual Faith for Rights community of practice, jointly with the Dharma Alliance and the Bodhigaya Vijjalaya 980 Institute in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Bangkok. The meeting spotlighted Dharmic and Indigenous perspectives on human rights and peacebuilding, with the participation of United Nations experts, including the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as religious leaders and Indigenous representatives from South-East Asia, West African *mourchidates* (female religious guides) and scholars from Al-Azhar in Egypt. The meeting led to the adoption by participants of the Bangkok Declaration on Dharmic Perspectives on Faith for Rights, in which they stressed the importance of continuous inquiry, reflection and peer-to-peer learning in advancing both human rights and spiritual understanding and resolved to foster inclusive spaces, including for minorities.⁵⁸

III. United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities

63. The United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities continued to provide a platform to address issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, through awareness-raising, advocacy and capacity-building. The network brought together United Nations departments, agencies, programmes and funds. OHCHR continued to act as the permanent Chair for the network, with the United Nations Population Fund serving as the rotating Chair in 2025.⁵⁹

64. In 2025, the network promoted the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, inviting other United Nations entities to contribute to the commemoration of the milestone through events, activities, publications and other initiatives. The aim was to stimulate discussions on effective and innovative practices for preventing and combating racial discrimination.

65. In January, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations launched the United Nations action plan to enhance monitoring and response to antisemitism.⁶⁰ The action plan contains an outline of a system-wide approach to combating antisemitism, including through monitoring, training, advocacy and stakeholder engagement. As part of the efforts to implement the action plan, the network was tasked with supporting awareness-raising about antisemitism, as well as capacity-building and advocacy efforts, in particular in addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and promoting inclusive approaches across United Nations entities.

66. During the reporting period, the network organized four online communities of practice, bringing together staff from across the United Nations system to exchange good practices and identify solutions to common challenges. In March, OHCHR, UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime jointly organized a community of practice on combating racism in and through sport. In June, the Department of Global Communications, OHCHR and UNESCO jointly organized another session, which was focused on how the United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity could support advocacy and policymaking to combat racial discrimination and protect minorities.⁶¹ In October, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNESCO and OHCHR organized a session on how education served as a tool for realizing the full spectrum of minority rights. In October,

⁵⁸ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/religion/faithforrights/faith4rights-bangkok-declaration.pdf.

⁵⁹ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/un-network-racial-discrimination-and-protection-minorities.

⁶⁰ See www.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Antisemitism-UN-Action-Plan.pdf.

⁶¹ See www.un.org/en/information-integrity/global-principles.

OHCHR led a session on identifying strategies to eliminate discrimination based on work and descent and strengthening United Nations engagement at the country level.

67. The network actively contributed to the second global review of the integration of the human rights-based approach and the principles of leaving no one behind, gender equality and women's empowerment in the new generation of United Nations common country analyses and cooperation frameworks.⁶² The review included, at the network's request, dedicated questions on racial discrimination and the protection of minorities, providing an opportunity to strengthen evidence-based approaches to addressing racial discrimination and advancing minority rights.

IV. Conclusions

68. **Despite global commitments, minorities remain at heightened risk of exclusion and discrimination. States should take further steps to recognize minorities as a group at risk of being left behind and renew efforts to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. States should in particular take specific steps to enact comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and ensure the meaningful participation of minorities in decision-making processes.**

69. Progress achieved on minority rights in some countries demonstrates that structural inequalities can be dismantled even in challenging contexts, and those examples should inspire broader action. At the same time, the world is witnessing a surge in hate speech, in particular online, alongside coded or explicit incitement to violence against minorities, often voiced by politicians, business leaders, media commentators and others. These trends threaten social cohesion and peace. Addressing them requires firm responses, principled leadership and inclusive policies.

70. States should adopt and enforce robust legal and regulatory frameworks to govern data-driven technologies, including artificial intelligence, ensuring that they are transparent, accountable and free from discriminatory bias, including against minorities. Measures should include safeguards for equality and non-discrimination, data protection, privacy and access to information. The design, use and regulation of artificial intelligence should be subject to rigorous human rights impact assessments to ensure compliance with human rights and to prevent perpetuating structural and historical bias. Building digital systems that respect human dignity and comply with international human rights standards is essential to uphold the rule of law and social cohesion.

71. Political and faith leaders must take a clear and firm stand against hate speech, especially targeting religious or belief minorities, foster dialogue and affirm that violence is never acceptable. Collective action by all stakeholders is essential to curb incitement of hatred and build societies grounded in tolerance, mutual understanding and respect. Peer-to-peer learning in advancing both human rights and faith should be supported by fostering inclusive spaces for religious or belief minorities.

72. Lack of reliable data on minorities in most countries continues to hinder effective policymaking and inclusion. Despite decades of advocacy, this gap remains critical, underscoring the need for States to invest in systematic data collection, with strict safeguards and in accordance with international human rights law and a human rights-based approach to data. Reliable, disaggregated data, in particular on incitement to hatred and hate crime, provides an essential baseline for legislative and policy efforts. States should ensure that such incidents are captured in official statistics and establish robust systems and methodologies to record and analyse disaggregated data.

73. Through its engagement at the country and regional level and at headquarters, including by acting as the permanent Chair of the United Nations network on racial

⁶² See www.ohchr.org/en/un-interagency-network-hr-lnob-sd/human-rights-lnob-and-gewe-ccas-and-cfs.

discrimination and minority protection, OHCHR works to safeguard the rights of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. This includes tackling multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and integrating minority rights across all United Nations pillars and activities. OHCHR also continues to foster minority participation through its flagship Minorities Fellowship Programme. United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms also play a vital role in advancing the rights of minorities. Sustaining the work on minority rights requires dedicated resources and renewed commitment from all stakeholders.
