



General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 January 2025

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues at its seventeenth session on the theme “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”

Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat

Summary

The recommendations contained in the present report are drawn primarily from the discussions held and contributions made by participants at the seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, held on 28 and 29 November 2024, on the theme “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”. The Forum was divided into four panel discussions: (a) “Minority representation in public spaces”; (b) “Minority representation in education”; (c) “Minority representation in the media, including social media”; and (d) “Minority representation in art and culture”. The aim of the Forum was to serve as a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues faced by persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups and to tackle the multiple challenges faced by minority communities worldwide.



I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 6/15 and 19/23. It contains the recommendations made by the Forum on Minority Issues at its seventeenth session, held in Geneva on 28 and 29 November 2024, on the theme “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”. The work of the Forum was guided by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat. The Forum was chaired by Anastasia Crickley, Associate Professor Emeritus at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Chair of Minority Rights Group International and Chair of Pavée Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training, who was appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution 6/15. Almost 790 participants from 96 countries registered for the Forum, including representatives of States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental and regional organizations and mechanisms in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, minority groups and non-governmental organizations and academics and experts on minority issues.

2. The recommendations in the report, which are drawn primarily from the discussions and contributions made by the participants at the seventeenth session of the Forum, are based on international law as well as on standards and good practices in the area of the protection of minority rights. The recommendations are aimed at providing guidance for the further implementation of, inter alia, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

3. Key elements of the legal and normative framework from a human rights perspective include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

4. The aim of the seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues was to address the representation and self-representation of minorities in public spaces and discourses. Recognizing the critical role of representation of minorities in society, discussions at the Forum were focused on reducing biases, countering discrimination and enhancing the visibility of minorities in public spaces, education, the media and art and culture. In the discussions, the challenges faced by national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in achieving fair representation, including issues of invisibility, misrepresentation and the prevalence of negative stereotypes, were highlighted. The Forum sought to explore the societal impacts of biased representations of persons belonging to minorities, including scapegoating, hate speech, discrimination and violence, as well as the broader implications for social cohesion. In addition, the importance and benefits of self-representation, which empower minorities to shape their portrayal in public spaces and discourses, were recognized. Participants were encouraged to share best practices and initiatives, focusing on how self-representation of minorities can counter stigmatization and foster inclusive and diverse societies.

5. The Forum was divided into four panel discussions: (a) “Minority representation in public spaces”, which analysed how representations of minorities in public spaces reflect and shape national narratives and identities; (b) “Minority representation in education”, which addressed how the portrayal of minorities in education plays a crucial role in shaping how minorities see themselves and how they are perceived by society; (c) “Minority representation in the media, including social media”, which explored the role of traditional and social media in shaping public perceptions of minorities; and (d) “Minority representation in art and culture”, which was focused on the representation of minorities in various forms of art and culture and assessed opportunities for minorities to engage in their own cultural and traditional activities.

6. The recommendations of the Forum at its seventeenth session are organized under a set of general recommendations, followed by more specific recommendations, which are classified according to the four panel discussions that were held during the session. The recommendations:

(a) Aim to guide policy and practice at local, national and international levels, contributing to the integration of minority issues into broader institutional frameworks and efforts towards cohesive and equitable societies;

(b) Are intended to leverage opportunities, practices and initiatives that strengthen the inclusion of minority groups, in line with the principles and rights enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international instruments;

(c) Emphasize an intersectional approach, addressing the compounded challenges faced by minority women and other vulnerable groups;

(d) Reflect the recognition of the important role that the United Nations, as well as other international and regional organizations, civil society organizations, representatives of minority groups and other stakeholders can play in promoting fair minority representation.

7. The recommendations build on the recommendations prepared at earlier sessions of the Forum, in particular at the twelfth session, on “Education, language and the human rights of minorities”,¹ the thirteenth session, on “Hate speech, social media and minorities”,² and the sixteenth session, on “Minorities and cohesive societies: equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation”.³ They also follow up on the recommendations of the thematic reports of the Special Rapporteurs on Minority Issues, in particular the report to the Human Rights Council in 2021 on “Hate speech, social media and minorities”.⁴

8. The recommendations are intended to be implemented in countries across the world and to assist States, private companies and other stakeholders in gaining a better understanding of their human rights obligations in relation to the promotion and protection of the fair representation of minority groups.

II. General recommendations

9. On the basis of the four panel discussions held at the seventeenth session of the Forum, the Special Rapporteur proposes the following general recommendations:

(a) States should become parties and adhere to all international and regional human rights instruments that protect and promote the human rights of persons belonging to minority groups;

(b) States should ensure the full implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities;

(c) States should encourage the ongoing engagement of stakeholders in the Forum on Minority Issues in order to foster dialogue and cooperation, while acknowledging the valuable guidance produced by the Forum and emphasizing its relevance to human rights actors at the international, regional and national levels;

(d) States should strengthen the Forum on Minority Issues by supporting the establishment of a voluntary fund to promote the meaningful participation of civil society and representatives of minority groups in the Forum;

(e) States should recognize the importance of minority groups in creating flourishing and stable societies and the role of celebrating diversity in contributing to societal cohesion;

¹ [A/HRC/FMI/2019/1](#).

² [A/HRC/46/58](#).

³ [A/HRC/55/70](#).

⁴ [A/HRC/46/57](#).

(f) States should adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and implement effective anti-discrimination measures in order to ensure equal opportunities for all, including persons belonging to minority groups;

(g) The United Nations should ensure that minorities are included throughout their regional and country-specific programmes;

(h) The media should responsibly and proactively raise awareness about minority issues in order to educate the general public and hold decision makers accountable for their acts, policies and discourses that affect minorities.

III. Recommendations addressing challenges to minority representation in public spaces

10. The Special Rapporteur proposes the following recommendation addressing challenges to minority representation in public spaces:

(a) States should implement inclusive urban planning policies that prioritize the integration of culturally significant spaces for minority groups;

(b) States should allocate dedicated funding to projects that reflect the histories, contributions and traditions of national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities.

(c) States should promote the inclusion of minority histories and achievements in public art and symbols, such as murals, statues and monuments; both majority and minority languages should be displayed in public spaces;

(d) States should design accessible and inclusive public facilities to respect cultural and religious practices, such as providing spaces for prayer or meditation, as well as culturally appropriate amenities;

(e) States should establish programmes and partnerships to actively involve minority communities in the design, governance and decision-making processes related to public spaces; collaboration with civil society organizations representing minority groups is key to identifying and addressing the specific needs and aspirations of persons belonging to minorities;

(f) States should develop a charter of inclusive toponymic rights and practices, with a view to expanding existing frameworks to ensure that place names reflect minority contributions to society as a whole, as well as their own languages and cultural heritage.

IV. Recommendations addressing challenges to minority representation in education

11. The Special Rapporteur proposes the following recommendation addressing challenges to minority representation in education:

(a) States should adapt national curricula to incorporate the histories, languages, cultures and achievements of minority groups, ensuring that their history and their contribution to society as a whole are an integral part of mainstream education; educational reform should follow a human rights-based approach, fostering respect, understanding and intercultural dialogue while promoting a more inclusive national narrative;

(b) States should create participatory platforms involving parents and local minority communities in the design, monitoring and assessment of education policies;

(c) States should improve data collection on minorities, with a view to tailoring education policies to meet the needs of minorities and to ensure equal opportunities in education.

(d) States should expand access to education in minority languages through mother tongue instruction and bilingual or multilingual programmes;

(e) States should support minority-led non-governmental schools, based on human rights principles, enabling them to offer free and culturally relevant education aimed at preserving and promoting the cultural, linguistic and religious identities of minorities;

(f) States should promote the recruitment and training of educators from minority communities, along with culturally responsive teacher training for all educators, to ensure better representation of persons belonging to minorities in the educational community and to promote understanding and responsiveness to the needs of minority students in classrooms;

(g) States should implement specific programmes to address the compound challenges faced by persons with multiple intersectional identities, such as women, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons who belong to minority groups: these measures could include scholarships, tailored programmes and resources to ensure equitable access to quality education for all.

V. Recommendations addressing challenges to minority representation in the media, including social media

12. The Special Rapporteur proposes the following recommendation addressing challenges to minority representation in the media, including social media:

(a) States should establish diversity requirements for public broadcasters and offer support to minority-led media outlets and productions; such requirements ensure proportionate and unbiased representation of minority groups in media content, promoting their cultures, histories and identities, while allowing minorities the opportunity to exercise self-representation;

(b) States should dedicate appropriate funding to develop opportunities for minority-led media outlets, ensuring that they have the resources to thrive and amplify diverse voices;

(c) States should enact and enforce legislation to prohibit hate speech in traditional and social media, while also monitoring and correcting algorithmic biases in social media platforms to prevent the amplification of discriminatory narratives;

(d) The media and social media companies should develop clear and enforceable guidelines to counter hate speech against minorities and should be held accountable for violations of human rights on their platforms, in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; the media and social media companies should also develop and implement comprehensive training programmes for journalists, content creators and moderators to identify and counter hate speech;

(e) States should allocate resources to develop public awareness campaigns and school programmes that educate citizens about harmful bias against minority groups; such campaigns should highlight the positive aspects of diversity and emphasize how differences enrich societies, fostering mutual respect and coexistence;

(f) The media and social media platforms should actively promote diversity by ensuring diverse representation in content creation, advertising and leadership roles, as well as leveraging algorithms to amplify content from underrepresented groups;

(g) Independent bodies should be established at the national level to monitor media content for bias, misinformation and hate speech; civil society organizations should complement those efforts by tracking representation trends and advocating media practices that promote and represent diversity in society and self-representation of minorities.

VI. Recommendations addressing challenges to minority representation in the fields of art and culture

13. The Special Rapporteur proposes the following recommendation addressing challenges to minority representation in the fields of art and culture:

(a) States, private companies and civil society organizations should promote artistic collaborations between minority and majority artists; such initiatives can foster mutual understanding, challenge stereotypes and celebrate cultural diversity through shared creative expressions;

(b) States should increase funding for minority artists, cultural institutions and grassroots initiatives that highlight minority heritage and creativity, especially by ensuring equitable access to platforms for showcasing their work;

(c) International organizations and civil society organizations should establish networks and exchange programmes that facilitate the sharing of knowledge, traditions and creative strategies among artists, minority groups and institutions: the International Contest for Minority Artists, a successful example of such programmes, should be adequately funded and supported;

(d) Both the private sector and civil society organizations should sponsor exhibitions, festivals and events that prioritize diverse cultural expressions and minority representation, aiming at amplifying minority voices, engaging broader audiences and contributing to a richer, more inclusive, cultural landscape.
