

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS REVIEW

I. Justice System

B. Quality of justice

Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff, clerks/trainees)

In its 2023 concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the Republic of Cyprus, the Human Rights Committee welcomed the adoption in 2021 of the Law on Children in Conflict with the Law (No. 55(I)/2021), providing for the establishment of a criminal justice system friendly to children in conflict with the law. However, the Committee remained concerned about remaining gaps in the implementation of the above-mentioned law and reports suggesting that juvenile pretrial detainees are not completely separated from convicted juveniles. The Committee recommended that the State party intensify its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the Law on Children in Conflict with the Law, including by setting up specialized court facilities and providing them with adequate resources, including designating trained specialized judges ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 33, 34).

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the infrequent application of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) by the domestic courts system and the low level of public awareness of the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant and of the ability for individuals to submit claims of violations of their rights under the Covenant to the Committee. It recommended that the State party should strengthen awareness of the ICCPR among lawyers, prosecutors and judges to help ensure that its provisions are, where possible, invoked before and applied by the national courts ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 5, 6).

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee welcomed the legislative and institutional steps made by the Republic of Cyprus to combat and raise awareness of discrimination and hate crimes against vulnerable groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Turkish Cypriots and Roma communities, and notes with appreciation the creation in 2021 of an inter-agency working group on hate crimes in the Republic of Cyprus. However, the Committee was concerned by recent incidents of violence and discrimination against members of racial and ethnic minorities and against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, especially in rural areas. The Committee recommended that the State party intensify its efforts to combat hate speech and incitement to discrimination or violence on the grounds of, inter alia, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, with particular attention given to rural areas, in accordance with articles 19 and 20 of the ICCPR and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. The Committee recommended that the State party should provide adequate training to national and local authorities, law enforcement officials, judges and prosecutors on addressing hate speech and hate crimes and on promoting the principles of equality and diversity ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 9, 10(e)).

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee was concerned that cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, are still underreported, especially among ethnic minorities and foreign nationals, and that the prosecution and conviction rates

for domestic violence remain low. The Committee urged the Republic of Cyprus to continue its efforts to curb gender-based violence, in particular by taking all the measures necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the new National Strategy and National Action Plan (2023–2028) on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women. It should also continue its efforts to provide training on women’s rights and gender-based violence to judges and prosecutors ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 15, 16 (b)).

In its 2023 concluding observations, while noting the enactment in 2017 of Law No. 12(III)/2017, which provides for more severe penalties for offences of torture and ill-treatment, and the efforts made by the State party to ensure effective and impartial investigations, the Human Rights Committee remained concerned about the limited amount of data available on complaints of torture and ill-treatment and about the small number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sanctions for perpetrators in relation to such acts. The Committee recommended that the Republic of Cyprus increase its efforts to eradicate torture and ill-treatment, including by continuing its efforts to provide regular training to judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials on human rights, including on the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) and the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (Méndez Principles) ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 19, 20 (d)).

III. Media pluralism and media freedom

C. Framework for journalists' protection, transparency and access to documents

Law enforcement capacity, including during protests and demonstrations, to ensure journalists' safety and to investigate attacks on journalists

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee welcomed the entry into force in 2020 of the Law on Right of Access to Public Sector Information (No. 184(I)/2017). However, it was concerned that the Republic of Cyprus has not amended or repealed the Law on the Procedure for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic, which criminalizes publications that use unofficial geographical names, and that the law could be invoked to curb freedom of expression, such as in 2019, when the Auditor General threatened to withhold subsidies from the *Cyprus Mail* by invoking that law after the newspaper had used the Turkish-language name for a village in the northern part of Cyprus. Furthermore, the Committee was concerned that the Republic of Cyprus has not indicated any measures taken to investigate or prosecute threats against the authors of the multilingual glossary of sensitive phrases entitled *Words That Matter*, published in 2018 (arts. 19 and 20). In the light of the Committee’s previous recommendations,¹ it recommended that the State party should repeal the criminal provisions of the Law on the Procedure for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic. It recommended that the State party should also review other provisions of the law to ensure that they serve a legitimate public purpose, are necessary and proportionate to the aims pursued and impose the least restrictive measures possible for the achievement of these aims, as set out in the Committee’s general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. It recommended further that the State party should conduct prompt, effective and impartial investigations into allegations of threats or violence against journalists, including against the authors of *Words That Matter*, ensure that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, appropriately punished, and provide the victims with effective remedies, including compensation ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 39, 40).

Other

Non-discrimination, hate speech and hate crime - In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee welcomed the legislative and institutional steps made by the Republic of Cyprus to combat and raise awareness of discrimination and hate crimes against vulnerable groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Turkish Cypriots and Roma communities, and notes with appreciation the creation in 2021 of an inter-agency working group on hate crimes in the Republic of Cyprus. However, the Committee was concerned by recent incidents of violence and discrimination against members of racial and ethnic minorities and against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, especially in rural areas. The Committee recommended that the Republic of Cyprus reinforce cooperation among the relevant stakeholders, including civil society, and provide adequate training to media workers on addressing hate speech and hate crimes and on promoting the principles of equality and diversity ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 9, 10 (e)).

IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

B. Independent authorities

Independence, resources, capacity and powers of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs'), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee welcomed the A status reaccreditation, in 2022, of the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. Nevertheless, it remains concerned about the lack of Turkish-speaking staff, and about the reported need for adequate funding and for increased formal cooperation with civil society (art. 2). The Committee recommended that the State party should continue its efforts, including by implementing the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, to ensure that the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights fully complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and is able to carry out its mandate effectively and independently, including by ensuring that it has the human, financial and technical resources necessary to perform its tasks effectively. In that regard, the Committee encourages the State party to take measures to ensure the presence and participation of Turkish-speaking personnel ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 7, 8).

C. Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (incl. their publication and rules on collection of related data)

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee was concerned by reports that naturalization procedures lack transparency and are applied arbitrarily, resulting, for example, in the denial of applications from individuals who have previously received State benefits, such as persons with disabilities and survivors of torture or trafficking (arts. 2 and 26). The Committee recommended that the State party should ensure that naturalization procedures are transparent and that applicants have access to information concerning the requirements for citizenship and that they receive a decision on their application for citizenship within a reasonable period of time ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 11, 12).

D. The enabling framework for civil society

Rules and practices on the participation of civil society organisations and human rights defenders to the decision-making process

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee welcomed the legislative and institutional steps made by the Republic of Cyprus to combat and raise awareness of discrimination and hate crimes against vulnerable groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Turkish Cypriots and Roma communities, and notes with appreciation the creation in 2021 of an inter-agency working group on hate crimes in the Republic of Cyprus. However, the Committee was concerned by recent incidents of violence and discrimination against members of racial and ethnic minorities and against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, especially in rural areas. The Committee recommended that the State party intensify its efforts to combat hate speech and incitement to discrimination or violence on the grounds of, inter alia, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, with particular attention given to rural areas, in accordance with articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. Notably, it also recommended that the State party should promptly elaborate and adopt the proposed national action plan to combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity and religion, ensuring effective consultation of civil society ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 9, 10 (a)).

E. Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

Measures to foster a rule of law culture (e.g. debates in national parliaments on the rule of law, public information campaigns on rule of law issues, contributions from civil society, education initiatives etc.)

In its 2023 concluding observations, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the infrequent application of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by the domestic courts system and the low level of public awareness of the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant and of the ability for individuals to submit claims of violations of their rights under the Covenant to the Committee. It encouraged the Republic of Cyprus to take appropriate measures to educate the general public about the first Optional Protocol and the mechanisms in place to submit individual complaints of violations of the Covenant to the Committee. It also recommended that the State party should put in place effective procedures, accessible in Greek, Turkish and the minority languages, to assist complainants in pursuing recourse for violations of their rights under the first Optional Protocol. In addition, the State party should strengthen awareness of the Covenant among lawyers, prosecutors and judges to help ensure that its provisions are, where possible, invoked before and applied by the national courts ([CCPR/C/CYP/CO/5](#), paras. 5, 6).