



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-eighth session

Summary record of the 962nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 18 January 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Israel (continued) (CEDAW/C/ISR/4 and 5; CEDAW/C/ISR/Q/5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Israel took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Younis** (Israel), replying to a question raised at the previous meeting on the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, said that two civil servants from the Arab community would shortly be joining the Authority's current full-time staff of 10 in order to deal with issues in that community. The Authority's budget for 2011 had been doubled compared with the previous year and in 2011, for the first time, a specific allocation had been earmarked for the advancement of Arab women. The Authority was responsible for enforcing implementation of women's rights legislation and, consequently, all new laws and legislative amendments in that area entailed a new monitoring mandate for the Authority. In particular, the Authority monitored implementation of the 2008 amendment to the Statistics Ordinance that required public bodies collecting and publishing disaggregated data to publish gender-disaggregated data. With respect to the question on the 2007 law on the gender implications of legislation, which required the Authority to submit an opinion regarding the gender implications of bills and proposed regulations, she referred the Committee to her Government's replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/ISR/Q/5/Add.1), in particular the reply to question 7. Pursuant to Government Resolution No. 1563 of 28 March 2010, the Authority was also responsible for training women appointed by Government corporations as advisers on the status of women.

3. Her Government gave high priority to the integration of the Arab population in the civil service. As a result, the proportion of Arabs, Druze and Circassians employed in the civil service had increased steadily from 6.17 per cent in 2007 to 6.97 per cent in 2009 and the number of Arab women civil servants had risen from 1,256 in 2007 to 1,595 in 2009.

4. **Ms. Kugler Ramot** (Israel), in response to a question raised at the previous meeting on marital rape, said that it was considered as rape under the Criminal Code and was punishable by imprisonment of up to 20 years, under aggravated circumstances. On the issue of prostitution, she referred the Committee to her Government's reply to question 17 of the list of issues, as set forth in document CEDAW/C/ISR/Q/5/Add.1. As to trafficking, the definition of the offence in Israeli legislation was very broad and also covered internal trafficking. No cases of internal trafficking or trafficking between Israel and the Palestinian Authority had been reported. The National Coordinator was tasked with coordinating efforts to combat trafficking for the purposes of both prostitution and forced labour. There were also a special Knesset committee and an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealing with those issues. On the question of women migrant workers, she referred the Committee to the information provided by her Government in its reply to question 19 of the list of issues. Concerning domestic violence, she said that the number of complaints filed had decreased by 3 per cent compared to previous years.

5. Regarding the issue of detainees, she said that there were several instruments which ensured that all complaints of ill-treatment were properly investigated. While her delegation had no information concerning the allegations referred to by the Committee, she emphasized that any complaints should be submitted to the relevant body. Currently, there were no female Palestinian minors being held in Israeli Prison Service facilities. All detainees could receive family visits once every two weeks for 30 minutes; the number of adult visitors was limited, but there was no limit on the number of child visitors.

6. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega**, referring to the inadequate political participation of women in the State party, asked why the Government had not taken measures to enforce quotas for political parties to ensure more equal representation of women and men in parliament. With respect to the public administration, she said it was surprising that, despite the high level of education of the female population, women did not enjoy the same benefits as men, although they had the same obligations. As to the role of the Department for the Advancement and Integration of Women within the Civil Service in investigating complaints of discrimination from women civil servants, she wished to have information on the types of complaints received and their outcome. Lastly, referring to reports received regarding the detention of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, including Maryam Salah and Mona Mansour, she asked whether any prosecutions had been made against those persons.

7. **Ms. Schulz** commended the State party on the high level of representation of women in the judicial profession but noted that the religious courts, which had exclusive jurisdiction over matters of marriage and divorce, were totally male-dominated. She was concerned that that situation represented a violation of the right to equality in employment, since women could not be appointed to serve as judges of those courts. The delegation had stressed that the principle of equality was a fundamental principle of the State of Israel, and that human rights protection was guaranteed by various basic laws, including the basic law on the freedom of occupation, which guaranteed the right of every citizen to engage in an occupation, profession or trade. It was her understanding that only a law that was in accordance with the values of Israel and enacted for a proper purpose allowed derogation from a right enshrined in a basic law. She therefore wished to know whether the State party's reservation to article 7 (b) of the Convention, which justified maintaining exclusively male religious courts, could be considered equivalent to a law that allowed derogation from the basic law on the freedom of occupation.

8. **Ms. Ameline** recalled the importance of involving women in the peacemaking process and enquired what measures were being contemplated to address that issue. Noting that legislation governing nationality and entry into Israel had been enacted as a temporary measure and was currently valid until 31 January 2011, she asked whether the political will existed to remove that measure. She sought clarification concerning the conditions under which Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem might lose their residency rights. Lastly, she invited the delegation to comment on reports that migrant women were obliged to send their children abroad as a condition for retaining their residency status.

9. **Ms. Patten** commended the State party on its achievements in the area of gender equality since its previous periodic report. Since the Committee had identified article 16 as one of the core provisions of the Convention, she asked whether the State party was contemplating withdrawing its reservation to that article. With respect to the jurisdiction of religious courts, she noted that, while rabbinical courts had exclusive jurisdiction in matters of marriage and divorce, cases relating to divorce disputes, such as child custody and maintenance, were under the concurrent jurisdiction of both civil and rabbinical courts. The fact that the filing of a suit in one court prevented the matter from being adjudicated by the other court had given rise to the practice whereby litigants sought to file their case in the court they judged to be most advantageous to their cause. She would like to know what was being done to address the concerns expressed by women in that regard and whether the Government had considered reviewing the jurisdiction of rabbinical courts. She enquired whether judges in the rabbinical courts received any training on the principles of the Convention and, more specifically, on article 16. Given that currently all Jews in Israel, whether religious or secular, could be divorced only in the rabbinical courts, she asked whether the Government was envisaging the enactment of a system of civil marriage and divorce as an option available to all, regardless of religious affiliation. She requested the State party to provide additional information on the legal tools referred to in its reply to

question 38 of the list of issues, whereby a religious court could force a husband to provide a divorce to his wife or force the wife to receive the divorce. Lastly, she wished to know what steps were being taken to bring legislation governing the age of marriage into line with international standards.

10. **Ms. Acar** said that the presence of multiple legal systems, particularly when they were obligatory for different religious and ethnic groups, almost always resulted in a situation that was disadvantageous to women. In that connection, she asked the delegation to provide information on the retroactive invalidation of divorces by rabbinical courts and the social and legal consequences of that practice, particularly with respect to women's equality with men. The fact that exclusively male rabbinical courts were making rulings in divorce cases appeared to be contrary to the principle of equality before the law. She invited the delegation to comment on that matter.

11. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** recalled that the United Nations had been established in the aftermath of the Second World War as a forum for the prevention of conflict, the promotion of peace and the self-determination of colonized peoples. She therefore deplored the continuing situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and expressed the hope that the parties concerned would, in a spirit of goodwill, negotiate a peace agreement that would put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

12. **Ms. Ameline** welcomed the progress made by the State party in many areas relating to the status of women. She expressed concern, however, that despite some reforms, marriage and divorce remained largely patriarchal, resulting in discrimination against women with regard to men and between religious and non-religious women. Continuation of the status quo affected not only women but society as a whole. She deplored the State party's reservation to article 16 of the Convention — one of its most important articles — and requested information on efforts to eliminate discrimination in marriage and divorce, which would help make Israel a truly modern and democratic society.

13. **Mr. Abu-Haya** (Israel), with regard to the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), said that Israeli society valued the work of such organizations, whether national or international, and the contribution they made to democracy. Concerns had, however, been raised about the origin of the funding of some organizations, their use of those funds and their political or quasi-political agendas. Accordingly, the Knesset intended to establish a panel to investigate such matters, in particular with regard to criticism of the Israeli Defence Forces and the State of Israel, with a view to full disclosure. The membership and exact mandate of that panel had yet to be determined, but it would most certainly deal with such issues as transparency and the role of NGOs in Israeli society.

14. **Ms. Matias** (Israel) said that, while her delegation did not have all the necessary information immediately available, it would try to give as full a response as possible to all the Committee's questions, some of which did not relate to the State party's obligations under the Convention.

15. **Ms. Kugler Ramot** (Israel), with regard to the State party's reservation to article 16 of the Convention, recalled that the reservation had not been found to be incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention. The status of that reservation was reviewed periodically by the competent authorities and taking into account the views of civil society. At the current time, the State party's position regarding the reservation had not changed.

16. **Ms. Matias** (Israel) added that the fact that the status of the reservation was periodically reviewed did not imply any intention to withdraw. She simply wished to reassure the Committee that the State party took into account its concerns in that regard.

17. **Ms. Kugler Ramot** (Israel) said that matters relating to divorce could be dealt with by the rabbinical or family courts; procedures for a religious marriage were different from

those for a civil marriage. Measures were in place to ensure a balance between the roles and responsibilities of the two types of court. There were 21 women family court judges. Matters dealt with by the family courts included child support, alimony, domestic violence, property rights, custody of children and adoption, and, in the case of Muslims, parental matters. Such matters could likewise be decided in the rabbinical courts within the limits prescribed by the law and with the consent of the parties concerned. Issues including child abduction, the legal age for marriage, changes of name, surrogacy and parenthood came under the exclusive jurisdiction of the family courts.

18. Matters relating to Jews married under religious law were dealt with by the rabbinical courts, except in respect of persons married abroad; those marriages and the rights of the partners were recognized in Israel even if not carried out in accordance with Halacha (Jewish law). For detailed information on the dissolution of a Jewish marriage and the distribution of property thereafter under Halacha, she referred the Committee to her Government's reply to question 38, as set out in document CEDAW/C/ISR/Q/5/Add.1.

19. Women migrant workers, many of whom were employed as live-in caregivers, were granted special short-term work permits with no right to residency status. They did not have the right to bring first-degree family members to Israel, except for siblings. If they became pregnant they were entitled to all applicable social security benefits, including health care and maternity leave and pay, however, given the short-term nature of their work permits, they could not remain in Israel with their child and were required to return to their country of origin. If they chose to return to Israel within two years a new temporary work permit could be issued through an expedited process.

20. **Ms. Younis** (Israel), turning to the issue of the representation of the Arab population in the judicial system, said that as at December 2010, only 1 of the judges on the Supreme Court was a Christian Arab; of the 128 district court judges, 5 were Muslim, 2 Christian and 1 Druze; of the 381 magistrates, 14 were Christian, 10 Muslim and 5 Druze; at the labour court level there were 1 Christian and 2 Druze judges. There were 3 Druze judges sitting on the State-funded Druze courts. Three new Arab judges would soon be appointed to the district courts. Of the 43 Arab judges, 9 were women; there were also 3 women court registrars.

21. **Ms. Acar**, turning to article 10 of the Convention, welcomed the progress made to promote education, in particular for women and girls, but expressed concern that less progress seemed to have been made within the Arab population. According to the fifth periodic report (para. 351) 2.5 per cent of Jewish women and 9.7 per cent of Arab women had never attended school; she wondered why that was so and why the percentage was so much higher for Arab women. Furthermore, while dropout rates were falling, she wondered why the dropout rate for Arab girls continued to be high. More information would also be appreciated on the educational situation of Arab girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

22. The Committee had information describing some of the barriers to Arab girls' education, which included a shortage of facilities, difficulty in providing secure school transport and harassment of girl students. She asked what measures the State party was implementing to address such problems, including temporary special measures. She welcomed efforts by the Ministry of Education to review textbooks with a view to eliminating gender stereotyping, but stressed that rather than gradually replacing materials, they should be replaced as a priority. She enquired whether a review had been undertaken of both Hebrew and Arabic teaching materials.

23. There were significant numbers of women in higher education but she noted that according to the fifth periodic report (para. 367) women continued to study mostly the humanities; she asked what steps were being taken to encourage women to study subjects such as mathematics, science, engineering and computer science. The fifth periodic report

indicated that 26 per cent of academic personnel in universities were women (para. 376); that figure was unacceptable for the Committee. She encouraged the State party to envisage temporary special measures to increase that percentage, in particular the percentage of Arab women, including at senior levels.

24. **Mr. Bruun** expressed concern that legislative progress and the ratification of the main International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions had failed to narrow the huge pay gaps persisting in the Israeli labour market, especially among skilled workers and academics. He asked what was being done to measure and address those disparities since the closure of the Institute of Productivity, which had previously monitored wage parity. Gender segregation was also a concern, with women overrepresented in part-time work. For that reason he sought information about the impact of the reported improvements to childcare facilities.

25. Sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited by law, yet the newly formed Equal Employment Opportunities Commission had dealt with only one case in 2009 and four in 2010. Was that situation indicative of a lack of effectiveness?

26. He was also concerned that the Supreme Court's ruling not to apply legislation governing work and rest hours to the domestic care sector exposed female migrant workers to potential abuse. He questioned the ruling's compatibility with the State party's obligations under the Convention, especially since migrant workers were also denied access to the Ombudsman. The policy whereby female migrant workers who married or became pregnant had their residence permits revoked and were forced to return to their country of origin was also questionable. Were male migrant workers who fathered children subject to the same treatment? If not, it was a clear case of inequality.

27. Lastly, noting the high female unemployment rate in Gaza, he asked what the authorities were doing to facilitate the import of essential supplies to enable women to start and maintain small businesses.

28. **Ms. Jahan** said that it was regrettable that the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission's otherwise commendable decision to make Arab employment a priority appeared to be limited to awareness-raising initiatives targeting potential Arab employers and Arab job-seekers. The related publications and websites should be translated into languages other than Arabic, notably Hebrew, in order to broaden the initiative's scope and encourage other population groups to consider recruiting Arab women. She also wished to know whether quotas existed for women from ethnic minorities in public employment and skilled training opportunities, and whether the retirement age was the same for men and women. Lastly, emphasizing the clear contraventions of certain ILO conventions, in particular provisions relating to the treatment of female migrant workers, she asked whether ratification of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was envisaged in the near future.

29. **Ms. Schulz** asked what the Government was doing to eliminate the disparities between Jews and Arabs evident in the key indicators of life expectancy and child mortality. In particular, she wished to know how the authorities ensured that checkpoints did not prevent Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from accessing specialist health care. Female migrant workers' exemption from social security cover was another concern, and she sought assurance that current legislation governing work and rest hours would be amended to protect female caregivers from the serious health consequences of excessively long working hours.

30. Details of measures taken to address domestic violence and its costs for women and the health system would also be appreciated, especially in the light of information suggesting that Arab women were at greater risk than Jewish women. Those details should

also encompass measures to protect Palestinian women against violence at the hands of settlers and the army, as well in the home.

31. Lastly, she asked whether the care given to female victims of trafficking differed according to whether they were granted refugee status or given a one-year visa only.

32. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she had been unable to find a convincing justification for the limited application of the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The restrictions on Palestinian women's rights, including their access to specialist services available only outside Gaza, were a grave concern and she urged the delegation to address the unanswered questions 28 and 29 of the list of issues.

33. She also sought clarification on an apparent inconsistency in the information on infant mortality among the Bedouin community. It was stated in the Government replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/ISR/Q/5/Add.1) that, after years of significant decline, the infant mortality rate had increased notably in 2010. However, the fifth periodic report attributed the higher than average infant mortality rate among the Bedouin to entrenched religious, cultural, consanguinity and congenital factors that did not vary significantly from one year to the next. What, therefore, was the reason for the State party's failure to achieve a continuous decline in infant mortality? Were the remedial measures described in the report sustainable and effective?

34. Although she supported easily accessible abortion, she was concerned that most women seeking terminations were single women wishing to avoid motherhood outside marriage. That situation pointed to insufficient sex education and contraceptive usage. She therefore sought confirmation that contraception was easily accessible to women of all ages in all areas under Israel's jurisdiction and asked what steps had been taken to prevent abortion being used as an irresponsible form of contraception.

35. In view of the rising rate of HIV/AIDS infection among women, especially immigrant women from high-risk countries, she was concerned that there might be a connection between that rise and the even faster rising rate of infection among homosexual and bisexual men, many of whom were married men who hid their sexual orientation, exposing their wives to the risk of infection. She would like to know how the State party dealt with the delicate and vulnerable situation of those women in sex education programmes.

36. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** asked whether women needed their husband's consent to apply for credit and whether Palestinian women in remote areas faced similar restrictions on access to credit as they did on access to other services. She would like to have disaggregated data comparing credit availability among Palestinian women and Jewish women.

37. She questioned whether the extended powers of the rabbinical courts in divorce proceedings were compatible with the amendment to legislation governing the Division of Property between Spouses that allowed for estates to be separated before the end of a marriage to prevent matrimonial assets from being used as leverage in divorce negotiations. A shadow report indicating that a rabbinical court had taken eight years to grant a woman's petition for divorce on the grounds of ill-treatment emphasized husbands' continuing dominance in divorce and property matters. In that connection, she enquired whether a woman also needed her husband's consent to establish a business on her own.

38. **Ms. Patten** said that she regretted the State party's failure to respond to question 35 of the list of issues and its rebuttal of the Convention's applicability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially since she recalled that in a previous dialogue the delegation had acknowledged that its Government had certain responsibilities in that Territory. Undoubtedly, the lives of Palestinian women were to a great extent controlled by the

Knesset, which governed all security and land-related issues, although the Palestinian Authority held civilian powers in Area C. A recent report by the International Committee of the Red Cross had emphasized the impoverishment and displacement directly attributable to Israeli policies and practices in that Area, where some rural Palestinian women were required to obtain a visitor's permit to access and cultivate their own land. She urged the delegation to comment on the impact of such policies.

39. Education and health services were ostensibly controlled by the Palestinian Authority but building permits for schools, hospitals, clinics and other civic buildings had to be obtained from the Israeli administration. That situation significantly impeded progress. In addition, reliable independent sources reported that rural Palestinian women were cut off from vital health services by checkpoints and the wall, and that permit requirements inhibited the movement of doctors, ambulances and mobile health teams. Given that medical facilities inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory were limited, she would like to know how many Palestinian women had applied for permits to seek medical treatment outside Gaza; how many such permits had been granted or refused; when the restrictions on travelling outside the Gaza Strip for medical treatment would be lifted; and when essential medical equipment would be allowed into Gaza to improve internal facilities.

40. Lastly, she enquired about the impact of the zoning and planning restrictions on living conditions in Area C and when the Government would cease its policy of demolishing "illegally" built homes.

41. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that, while an abundance of data was generally positive, in some cases it did not add to the reports' clarity. In particular, the lack of disaggregated, comparative figures (e.g. urban vs. rural, Jews vs. the rest of the population) had impeded the Committee's assessment of Israel's progress in fulfilling its obligations under article 14. The report considered the situation of Bedouin women but, aside from brief references to women with disabilities and elderly women, gave no targeted information about other vulnerable groups of women, including stateless women in Israel and Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She was concerned that the absence of such data might reflect a lack of political will to ensure access to essential services for disadvantaged groups and to address the associated stereotypes.

42. **Ms. Matias** (Israel) said that Committee members could find much of the data requested on the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, but that the information they sought was in many cases beyond the delegation's authority and control.

43. **Ms. Stauber** (Israel), referring to the applicability of the Convention to refugees and non-citizens, wished to state clearly that the Ministry of Education did not recognize the concept of an illegal child. Every child spending at least three months in Israel was entitled to free, compulsory education and, in the country as a whole, there were around 1,000 non-citizens aged under 18 attending Israeli schools at that time. Those students had the same rights as Israeli citizens, besides benefiting from affirmative action programmes organized in conjunction with NGOs.

44. The Ministry of Education also had an affirmative action policy, whereby women were always favoured whenever an equally qualified man and woman reached the final stages of the recruitment process.

45. Acknowledging the continued presence of gender stereotyping in education and books, she was pleased to report that the task of its elimination had recently been assigned to a newly appointed female officer who had brought a sense of urgency to the job and issued very clear instructions about acceptable gender representations. Examples of

educational materials prepared in accordance with the new guidelines were available for Committee members to examine.

46. The Ministry's work to eliminate stereotyping in books was complemented by a range of gender education and female empowerment initiatives designed to ensure fair gender representations from an early age, starting in kindergartens.

47. Arab schools enjoyed increased funding following the introduction of a new system that indexed budget allocations to individual schools to socio-economic conditions. In addition, a special programme covering the last five years of secondary education gave disadvantaged Arab students the benefit of smaller class sizes and extra teaching hours.

48. Other new educational initiatives included a plan to attract more women into technology and science-related disciplines, and a system of grants that had already given thousands of female and Arab students the opportunity to complete secondary school and enter higher education.

49. **Mr. Leventhal** (Israel), referring to the question from Ms. Schulz regarding differences in life expectancy and child mortality, observed that a book had recently been published on different aspects of the health inequalities in Israel. As overall averages, Israel's health indicators ranked high among the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, but the country now intended to see what more could be done to smooth out the inequalities among the different sectors of its population.

50. For child mortality in Israel, the best rate, of about 2 per 1,000 live births, was found among the Christian Arabs, as compared with the Jewish figure of 3 per 1,000, and that for child mortality in the Muslim Arab population of about 7.2 per 1,000. The high figure for the Muslims was related to the practice of consanguinity marriage, which although against sharia law, was still a reality.

51. Life expectancy of Arab women in Israel was 80.5 years, as against 83.9 for Jewish women. It was hoped that that gap would gradually decrease.

52. A related issue was that of the fertility rate, which was 2.2 children for Jewish women, 2.5 for Christian Arabs and Druze women and 3.9 for Muslim women. However, the rate was far higher for Bedouin women, although it had now dropped from 9 children to 7. Israel was counting on education to change the situation dramatically for Bedouin women, and was investing major amounts of money to that end. A special effort was being made to encourage Bedouin women to attend nursing and medical school. The country now had its first female Bedouin doctor, and six more were close to qualifying.

53. The Bedouin made up about 15 per cent of all the people living in the south of Israel, but in an affirmative action approach, more than 50 per cent of the clinics and mother-and-child health centres in that region were intended for them. Under the country's comprehensive health insurance system, the Bedouin were as entitled as any other sector of the population to benefit from such facilities and services, but they had to be persuaded to do so. Otherwise, they tended to approach health facilities much too late or not at all.

54. Responding to the questions about abortion, he explained that each hospital had a committee of three health professionals, two of whom had by law to be women, to examine applications for abortions, and that 95 per cent of such applications were granted. It was true that the Rabbinical Code was very influential, but it applied primarily to religious matters; it did not prevent women from obtaining an abortion if they needed one.

55. Recalling the question about migrant workers, he explained that all migrants who had a permit to work in Israel were entitled to health insurance, social security and indeed all the benefits offered by the country. The same did not hold for illegal undocumented migrant workers; nevertheless, Israel provided two health clinics to attend to their needs.

56. On the matter of HIV, the Government was aware that a given portion of the people moving to Israel, in particular from certain countries, would be HIV-positive. All such sufferers were accepted into the country and immediately provided with all the medication they needed.

57. Responsibility for all health matters in the so-called occupied territories was in the hands of the Palestinian Authority, which was beyond Israel's borders and not under its control. There was a very good relationship of quiet cooperation between the two health ministries, and media reports to the contrary were distortions of the facts.

58. Israel had very good health indicators by international comparison, but those high averages masked inequalities within the country. Believing that all sectors of its population had the same rights to health and other benefits, Israel was making a major effort and investing considerable sums of money to iron out those inequalities.

59. **Ms. Murillo de la Vega** said that, unless she had misheard, there had been no response to her questions relating to articles 7 and 13. She also wished to ask a follow-up question concerning health. Information was extant concerning Palestinian women who had been refused entry into Israel when they were seeking medical assistance, including in some situations of extreme gravity, such as that of a pregnancy which was life-threatening.

60. **Ms. Gabr** said that the basis for the assertions she had made earlier about prisoners and juvenile detainees was the information contained in paragraphs 27 and 28 of the concluding observations of the Committee against Torture on Israel's fourth periodic report (CAT/C/ISR/CO/4).

61. She wished to know whether Palestinian women prisoners could be in direct physical contact with their children when the children came to visit them in prison.

62. She asked whether any Palestinian women held positions of responsibility in the committees dealing with the future planning of the city of Jerusalem.

63. **Ms. Schulz** said that she had not received a clear answer to her question as to whether the State party's reservation to article 7 could be considered equivalent to a law that allowed derogation from the basic law guaranteeing access to all kinds of employment.

64. With regard to article 12, and her concern about female domestic workers, who were not covered by the legislation governing work and rest hours, she asked whether the Government intended to amend the legislation thereby overriding the related Supreme Court decision and granting such women the health protection they required.

65. **Ms. Matias** (Israel), while conceding that there were many questions that had not been answered, said that, the delegation did not have sufficient time to present all the material at its disposal. The delegation would be pleased to provide additional information, either at the present time or on a future occasion.

66. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation to provide some additional information in the remaining meeting time available.

67. **Ms. Stauber** (Israel) said that the Department of Sexuality and Family Life in the Ministry of Education was responsible for developing educational programmes dealing, inter alia, with sexuality, gender, sexual identity and orientation, pornography, pregnancy prevention and AIDS prevention. The curriculum it developed was provided to educational establishments of all kinds, and was identical for all students, although some schools taught boys and girls separately.

68. Illiteracy rates varied according to the age of women, and illiteracy among girls aged 15 to 17 had been eliminated.

69. With regard to the issue of access to education, there was admittedly a problem in the very crowded eastern neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, but the Ministry of Education was making major efforts to remedy the situation. In the past five years, almost 300 new classroom facilities had been built, and considerable sums spent on computerizing kindergartens and schools. Special training courses were given on teaching in the difficult conditions of East Jerusalem, together with vocational training programmes for women teachers and women's and girls' empowerment programmes. The Ministry also ran various other programmes, including, to provide hot meals and longer schooling hours, for the children of working mothers to assist challenged junior high school students and gifted Arab children.

70. **Ms. Kugler Ramot** (Israel) explained that Israeli law did not allow foreign caregivers to be employed for 24 hours continuously. However, it must be remembered that in many cases they were living in their patients' homes, and thus there was a need to distinguish between the hours in which they were actually providing care, and those in which they were present in the home but not working.

71. Following complaints from NGOs concerning the excessive workload of caregivers looking after elderly or disabled couples, the Ministry of the Interior, in consultation with the National Insurance Institute, had stipulated that two such people were not allowed to employ only one foreign caregiver between them, other than in exceptional circumstances with the approval of a special committee.

72. It was not true that such workers were excluded from the protection of the Ombudsman. The only limitation placed on the new Ombudswoman who dealt with complaints from migrant workers was that the official could not file lawsuits on behalf of foreign workers against the employers if the latter were elderly or disabled. However, that limitation did not apply if it appeared that an elderly or disabled employer had severely abused a foreign caregiver, or in cases of violence or sexual abuse.

73. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** commended the State party on the eradication of female genital mutilation and asked the delegation for details on how it had been achieved.

74. She would also like to know about mechanisms for the reunification of displaced families whose members were scattered to different places in the territory of Israel.

75. **Ms. Matias** (Israel) thanked the Committee members for their thorough and in-depth consideration of her country's report. While it could be seen that Israel and the Committee had differing views with regard to the applicability of the Convention in the territory of the Palestinians, the delegation nevertheless felt that it had gained much insight from the discussion, and looked forward to the Committee's concluding observations.

76. **The Chairperson** commended the State party for its initiatives to further implement the provisions of the Convention in the legislative, judicial and executive areas. However, she encouraged it to take further measures, including special temporary measures where appropriate, to address the Committee's concerns relating to the need for a more comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the Convention in Israel and the territories effectively under its control. One particular concern related to the lack of comprehensive legislation on discrimination against women covering areas such as family law, gender-based violence and the situation of women migrant workers.

77. A further concern was the apparent lack of effective assistance for women from minorities, who were subjected to domestic violence and other forms of violence.

78. She encouraged the State party to disseminate the Convention and information on access to law and justice in the Arabic language.

79. One of the groundbreaking concepts of the Committee, expressed through its general recommendations, was that discrimination could have an impact both directly and indirectly. Consequently, equality must be exercised de jure and de facto. The principles and rules of the Convention should be respected and applied to everyone living in Israel and in the territories under its control, including minorities.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.