Human Rights Committee
115th session

Summary record of the 3215th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 October 2015, at 10 a.m.
Chairperson: Mr. Salvioli

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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

*Fifth periodic report of Iraq* (continued)
The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant (continued)

Fifth periodic report of Iraq (continued) (CCPR/C/IRQ/5 and CCPR/C/IRQ/Q/5 and Add.1)

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

2. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation to reply to the questions raised at the previous meeting.

3. **Mr. Ismail** (Iraq) thanked the Committee — first, for its comments, which would be of great value when preparing his country’s sixth periodic report and, secondly, for the understanding it had shown about the current situation in Iraq, which posed substantial challenges to the work of the authorities responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights. In fact, experts from the capital had been prevented by those exceptional circumstances from attending the current meeting.

4. The rights embodied in the Covenant were integral and non-derogable except when public interest required otherwise. Despite the terrorist threats to national security, which had targeted all sectors of society, the Government and Parliament were continuing to adopt new laws to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights institutions and law enforcement agencies monitored the performance of government institutions in the human rights field and had documented abuses by the former dictatorship. Government centres and educational institutions were working to foster a human rights culture, and civil society organizations had been encouraged to expose human rights abuses. The Constitution adopted in 2005 established basic principles and such guarantees of human rights and fundamental freedoms as the separation of powers and an independent judiciary. Furthermore, the Constitution paid due heed to the need to respect the rights of all individuals without discrimination.

5. Vicious terrorist attacks on civilian targets such as markets, hospitals and schools were tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Iraq was spearheading the counterattack against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on behalf of the international community. The Government was providing support to all local authorities in order to recover territory under ISIL control, restore stability and promote reconstruction. It was also supporting efforts to encourage national reconciliation through regular meetings aimed at achieving consensus on an overall strategy to strengthen national unity, peace and stability. His country believed that through a spirit of national unity, it would succeed in fighting extremism.

6. **Mr. Abbas** (Iraq), replying to the questions regarding counter-terrorism, said that a number of laws aimed at combating incitement to terrorism had been adopted since 2003, and others were under review. Iraq was a party to numerous international and regional counter-terrorism treaties. He drew attention to the information provided in paragraph 33 (a) of the replies to the list of issues (CCPR/C/IRQ/Q/5/Add.1) with regard to Counter-Terrorism Act No. 13 of 2005, to which reference was also made in paragraph 165 of the State party’s fifth periodic report (CCPR/C/IRQ/5). He reiterated the information regarding secret informants to be found at the end of paragraph 33 (a). He referred to paragraphs 34 and 36 of the replies to the list of issues in respect of states of emergency. As explained in paragraph 7 of the State party’s report, systematic and gross violations of human rights in the period 2003–2011 had killed and injured hundreds of thousands of people and had threatened the rule of law.
7. Article 132 of the Constitution made provision for the payment of State compensation to victims of terrorist attacks. The Compensation Act adopted pursuant to that article defined 21 types of compensation and the rates thereof. Special committees had been set up in all cities and governorates to assess damages. The number of civilian and military victims had been rising of late. Religious minorities had been targeted, and a priceless cultural and religious heritage had been destroyed. The demographic composition of the population in some areas had been changed.

8. ISIL was a transnational body which drew its strength from an ideology that bred hatred and condoned cruelty. It was funded by global networks and the smuggling of oil from the territory under its control. It received worldwide logistic support, favourable coverage in some media, as well as the backing of remnants of the former Baath party. As it was clear that incitement to terrorism based on fundamentalism and extremism jeopardized human rights and undermined international stability and prosperity, all nations should join in the fight to preempt that threat. All measures in compliance with international law should be taken at the national and international levels to protect the right to life. ISIL had tried to make it seem as if one religious group was battling against another and as if the strife was purely internal, but everyone was targeted by terrorism: the crimes of ISIL and other terrorist groups did not stop at the border. Events had shown that the terrorists were barbarians without morals; Iraqis should be offered international protection against their crimes.

9. Mr. Ameen (Iraq) said that since the 1980s, Iraq had passed through a dark period of wars, tragedies and the adverse effects of the economic blockade. In 2003, it had initiated a democratic process under which power had been transferred to a transitional government, and in 2005, a new Constitution had been adopted after a referendum. While it was therefore questionable whether the current Government could be held accountable for human rights abuses prior to 2003, the principles governing the succession of States under international law meant that it was impossible to ignore the failings of earlier Governments.

10. Turning to the question on the status of the Covenant in the Iraqi legal framework, he explained that the Covenant had been applicable as from the date of its ratification by Iraq. Although all judges had to abide by it, in practice they tended to resort first to national law. However, the Covenant could be invoked by a defence lawyer. It would be necessary to look at all the cases which had come before Iraqi courts in the preceding ten years in order to say whether the sentences which had been handed down had been based on the Covenant.

11. In response to the question concerning awareness-raising measures by the Government, he said that the large number of human rights institutions operating within the country and the human rights sections within the relevant ministries strove to raise awareness of the Covenant in Iraq, in cooperation with civil society organizations and the human rights office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq. There were various levels of training to improve awareness of the Covenant among lawyers and judges. Some training was provided within Iraq and some was offered in neighbouring countries or in Geneva, The Hague or New York. One module of the compulsory training which lawyers must attend before they could become members of the Bar Association covered human rights. Similarly, no one could become a judge without graduating from the Judicial Training Institute, where one of the main courses dealt with human rights.

12. With regard to the question of whether Iraq intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, he said that an interministerial committee had been set up to review all international human rights instruments to which his country could accede. While the Optional Protocol would be a real guarantee of a higher level of human rights protection, and Iraq was trying to ratify the largest possible number of
international instruments, it had to be remembered that the country had to contend with millions of internally displaced persons and hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees. It was fighting terrorist gangs in one third of its territory, and the huge drop in oil prices had led to a financial crisis.

13. The Independent Commission for Human Rights operated without interference from the Government, but a Chairperson had still not been appointed. He emphasized, with reference to the Committee’s request to review and repeal legal provisions that discriminated against women, that the Iraqi Criminal Code of 1969 was in fact the most advanced in the region, after the Egyptian Criminal Code. The principles of Islamic sharia were incorporated to varying degrees in the provisions of the Code, and efforts were made to repeal those provisions that ran counter to obligations under ratified international instruments. Measures were taken to enhance the role of women in the political, public and private spheres. In comparison with neighbouring States, women’s representation in public positions was strong and extended to the Cabinet, where a number of women were employed. Appointment to the judiciary was based strictly on the results of competitive examinations; there were a number of women judges in the State party. Some women were hindered by their families, however, who considered that women’s responsibilities and sensitivities conflicted with the functions of a criminal judge.

14. A report by an independent international commission of inquiry had confirmed that in hundreds of cases, girls under the age of 18 had been separated from their families and forced into marriage with members of Al-Qaida and ISIL. Units had been established to provide psychological support and rehabilitation to victims of ISIL violence, particularly girls who had been recruited as slaves, some of whom had been bought back from their captors. However, those units operated with very limited resources. Statistics were not available on the numbers of victims of enforced disappearance from minority groups. Whenever such cases were brought to the knowledge of the authorities, however, all measures were taken to locate the victims and provide reparation to them, or to their families if they could not be found.

15. Members of the Shiite militias came from all factions and ethnic groups; cases of murder within the militias, including revenge killings, were considered punishable offences which fell under the jurisdiction of the military courts. Data on the sentences handed down in such cases were not available, but the rate of such crimes had been dramatically reduced as a result of enhanced civilian protection. Attacks or offences against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons perpetrated by militias allied with the Government and law enforcement officers were subject to prosecution; however, most allegations of such crimes were without grounds.

16. In the light of the country’s critical economic situation, a number of cost-cutting reforms had been introduced, including the administrative dissolution of the Ministry of Human Rights. A committee had been set up to ensure that the files, functions and staff of the Ministry were adequately distributed among the human rights divisions of other ministries, thereby guaranteeing continued observance of the State party’s international obligations.

17. The Iraqi Supreme Criminal Tribunal had been disbanded, as it had been a transitional justice mechanism to try crimes committed by the former regime between 1968 and 2003, and had now served its purpose. Prosecutions had been brought and sentences handed down to the commanding officers who gave the orders for certain events before 2003, such as the shootings in Halabja and Dujail. The fact that the same official headed both the Supreme Court and the Supreme Judicial Council did not jeopardize the independence of the judiciary. The independence of both institutions from executive and legislative powers was protected by law.
18. The death penalty had been legal in Iraq for many years, but the issue had come under discussion and the Government was envisaging a review of the matter once stability had been regained in the country. The death sentence could be passed under the Counter-Terrorism Act, which had a broad scope of application owing to the viciousness and variety of terrorist attacks carried out in the country. Under the Constitution, extracting confessions under duress or torture was prohibited, and such confessions were invalid in a court of law. Allegations by detainees of torture were investigated by the investigating judge assigned to the case, together with independent medical experts. The allegations and findings of the investigation were registered in the case file. When acts of torture were found to have been used in interrogations, any confession made by the detainee was declared null and void. Senior officers who issued orders to carry out acts of torture for the purpose of eliciting a confession were held accountable and sentenced accordingly. The use of evidence submitted by secret informants was prohibited by law: only information corroborated by factual evidence presented before the investigating judge was admitted.

19. Ms. Al-Jubori (Iraq) said that the High Commission for Human Rights conducted inspection visits in juvenile detention centres, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to ensure that human rights standards were upheld. The Commission designed and delivered human rights training to other relevant ministries and launched initiatives to raise public awareness of its functions and projects.

20. The Family Protection Committee had been set up, and a raft of legislation introduced, with the aim of protecting women and children from violence. The bill on protection against domestic violence set out a definition of domestic violence that covered physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm. It also provided for the establishment of a council for the protection of victims of domestic violence, with the participation of various ministries. A reporting mechanism was to be created, under which officially registered complaints were to be referred to the local authorities competent to provide protection — within 20 hours in Baghdad, and within 72 hours in other regions of the country. In addition, the bill proposed the establishment of shelters and the introduction of victim rehabilitation programmes and awareness-raising campaigns. It entitled the competent judge to issue arrest warrants against the perpetrators of domestic violence.

21. The 2014 Social Protection Act contained provisions concerning victims of domestic violence. It covered people with disabilities and special needs, divorcees, women abandoned by their husbands, widows, single women, orphans, families of detainees sentenced to a prison term of 1 year, persons benefiting from the State’s role as a provider of shelter, juveniles sentenced to a prison term of more than 1 year, married students until they had completed secondary education and families without incomes or with incomes below the poverty line. Foreigners with a residence permit could also benefit from its provisions. Article 28, paragraph 1, stipulated that Palestinians who had been resident in Iraq since 1948 should be treated on an equal footing with Iraqi citizens. Article 28, paragraph 2, stipulated that the Act was applicable to Iraqi women married to foreigners and their children, as well as to foreign women married to Iraqis and their children.

22. Once the bill on protection against domestic violence was enacted, the minimum penalty for acts of domestic violence would be a prison term of 3 months and/or a fine of 1 million Iraqi dinars. A maximum penalty of 7 years was to be imposed in cases of recidivism. The Council of Ministers had approved the bill by decision No. 27 of 2015 and had referred it to the Council of Representatives, where a first reading had been held. Civil society organizations supported the bill but considered that the proposed penalties should be more severe and that its enactment should be expedited. The
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was prepared to open shelters for victims as soon as the law came into force.

23. The Council of Ministers had adopted decision No. 201 in 2015, concerning a National Emergency Plan for the protection of survivors of domestic violence, particularly displaced women. The Ministry of State for Women’s Affairs had played a major role in drafting the Plan. Decision No. 201 had been circulated to all ministries to ensure that funds were allocated for its implementation. Training courses had been organized for a large number of social researchers, in cooperation with international and civil society organizations, so that they could provide effective assistance for women survivors of domestic violence when visiting camps for internally displaced persons.

24. The Government had adopted a number of measures to address the crimes committed by ISIL, particularly abuse of the rights of minorities. The measures focused on providing compensation for damage suffered and on bringing those responsible to justice. In November 2014, the Council of Ministers had adopted decision No. 20, which characterized the abuse to which the Yazidis, Turkmen, Christians, Shabak, Feyli Kurds and others had been subjected at the hands of the ISIL terrorists as acts of genocide. The decision had been circulated to all ministries with a view to ensuring that they took the requisite action in response to complaints.

25. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had set up a committee headed by the director of the Women’s Welfare Department to provide support for Yazidi women who had been subjected to sexual violence and for Yazidi divorcees and widows. The Government had also organized training and rehabilitation programmes in cooperation with civil society organizations. Volunteer Yazidi students were admitted to the police academy. A civil registry office had been opened in Shaikhan in the governorate of Nineveh for displaced persons who had lost their identity documents. Passports and certificates of Iraqi nationality were being issued to rescued Yazidi women.

26. Women had occupied many high-level positions in the public sector since 2003. They were encouraged to compete and were appointed on the basis of their skills and experience. Iraq attached great importance to the fight against gender discrimination. The ministries had set up a unit for awareness-raising on gender issues, with the support of the Ministry of State for Women’s Affairs. Data were collected with a view to analysing the gender gap and promoting the advancement of women in employment and society as a whole.

27. The Prime Minister was entitled to declare a state of emergency, subject to the approval of the Council of Representatives. However, the Government was committed to the principles of democracy and did not wish to militarize the country or to grant exceptional powers to the army and the police, since such action might lead to human rights abuses.

28. The transitional justice institutions established after 2003 included the Martyrs’ Foundation, the Political Prisoners’ Foundation and the Property Claims Commission. The first two provided reparations to the families of persons executed for political reasons by the former regime. The Property Claims Commission had now been disbanded, but its files had been transferred to the civil courts.

29. Following the promulgation of the Trafficking in Persons Act No. 28 of 2012, a Central Committee composed of representatives of various ministries had been established in the Ministry of the Interior to implement its provisions. Subcommittees had also been created in the governorates, and a Directorate to Combat Human Trafficking had been established in the Ministry of the Interior. The Central Committee had recommended the opening of a hotline for complaints and the allocation by all ministries of funds for awareness-raising campaigns. It had taken
steps, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, to ensure that the Trafficking in Persons Act was covered in college and university curricula.

30. In training courses for law enforcement agencies, organized in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), officers were trained to identify the crime of trafficking and to provide support for its victims. IOM had also organized training courses in receiving and interviewing victims and in preparing psychosocial rehabilitation programmes for staff who would be employed in shelters. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had equipped a building to be used as a shelter. The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence would guarantee the requisite security.

31. The Committee had asked why the number of complaints of human trafficking so greatly exceeded the number of investigations initiated. Some complaints had been withdrawn as a result of reconciliation, and complainants had failed to take follow-up action in other cases. The analysis of testimony and other procedures, which were time-consuming, also contributed to the disparity.

32. The Ministry of Human Rights organized a human rights awareness-raising and education programme each year. Basic courses were provided for the staff of all ministries and for secondary-school and university students, who were familiarized with the provisions of international human rights treaties ratified by Iraq. On completing the training courses, students could attend specialized courses in the fields covered by the different treaties. Human rights directorates, divisions or branches had been established in all ministries. The High Commission for Human Rights also organized human rights training courses and awareness-raising campaigns.

33. A Muslim who converted to another religion could be deprived of his or her inheritance and other benefits under the Iraqi Personal Status Act.

34. No provision of the Constitution or any other legislation forged a link between religion and politics.

35. The recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2014 had been circulated to all ministries, and representatives of ministries and civil society organizations had attended meetings at the National Centre for Human Rights to draw up a national plan for their implementation. The plan had been completed in May 2015 and submitted to the Council of Ministers. It provided for the implementation of all recommendations, including those concerning child marriage, early detection of cancer and improvement of women’s economic and social situation.

36. The Child Welfare Authority established in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs acted in coordination with all other ministries and civil society organizations. A unit that specialized in addressing the problem of child labour visited factories and businesses to investigate violations of the law and to warn them against employing minors.

37. The 2015 Employment Act clarified the conditions governing the employment of foreign workers in Iraq.

38. **Mr. Mohamed** (Iraq) said that the adoption of the protection of minorities bill had been delayed by the submission of a number of proposals by representatives of minorities. The proposals had been combined and incorporated into the bill by the Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives, in cooperation with the Committee on Minorities. The minority rights guaranteed by the bill reflected the provisions of the 2005 Constitution, which stipulated that all Iraqis were equal before the law. The cultural and social identity of religious and ethnic minorities was also protected by a number of other laws.
39. The representation of minorities in the provincial councils was guaranteed. Act No. 44 of 2008 amending the Provincial, District and Sub-District Councils Electoral Act No. 36 of 2008 established a quota system for minorities. They were also guaranteed eight seats in the new Council of Representatives based on their proportionate presence in the governorates. Five seats were reserved for Christians and one seat each for the Sabian, Yazidi and Shabak minorities. Several members of minorities had held high-level governmental posts such as ministers, undersecretaries, ambassadors and directors general. An Endowment Council comprising Christian, Yazidi and Sabian endowment directorates had been set up to manage the affairs of Iraqi religious minorities in the same way as the Sunni and Shiite Endowment Councils. A Council of Heads of Christian Communities had also been established.

40. The Ministry of Planning’s attempts since 2004 to conduct a general population census had been impeded by the security and political situation. As an alternative, a general census of buildings, housing, facilities and households had been conducted in 2010 under extremely difficult conditions due to the security risks and technical and organizational challenges. The census had provided demographic, socioeconomic and educational data as well as information on financial and insurance services. However, the Ministry of Planning had been unable to obtain data on the composition of the population. The Government attached the utmost importance to the conduct of a general population census and planned to proceed with the project once the current situation was resolved and territory under ISIL control was liberated.

41. The authorities did not seek to exercise influence over the judiciary, which was independent of the legislative and executive branches. Judges faced the same challenges as those encountered by other persons in high-profile positions within the community, such as diplomats and university professors. The Government had agreed to the request by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers to visit the country in March 2015. Regrettably, however, the Special Rapporteur had been forced to postpone the visit for budgetary reasons; it was hoped that new arrangements would be made for a visit in the near future.

42. The death penalty was restricted to the most serious crimes, such as terrorist offences, and was imposed only in accordance with the law. Like every State that wished to preserve the safety and security of its citizens, Iraq had the sovereign right to impose the harshest penalties on those who sought to undermine the very foundations of society. The Government would review the application of the death penalty when it considered that the situation in the country no longer called for such a penalty.

43. Masonic and Zionist organizations were monitored by the relevant security authorities with a view to preserving public order, in accordance with the applicable law.

44. The Government categorically denied the existence of secret detention facilities in Iraq. It would be appreciated if the Committee could forward any information that it might have in that regard so that the authorities could investigate any such claims in an open and transparent manner. Procedural rights and safeguards relating to arrest and detention were set out in the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure; for example, nobody could be arrested without a warrant that indicated his or her name and the reason for the arrest.

45. Referring to the alleged enforced disappearance of Mr. Mohammed Abbas Kadhim Al Sudani, he said that he had been arrested on 18 November 2014 by the intelligence authorities in Baghdad in accordance with article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act. On 4 May 2015, the authorities had contacted his mother and arranged for her to visit him in the prison where he was being held. The Committee on Enforced Disappearances had examined the case and had welcomed the action taken by the
It had subsequently informed the Government by a letter dated 14 September 2015 that it had closed the case file.

46. Act No. 105 of 1970 provided that no one was permitted to propagate the Baha’i faith or to belong to any of its congregations and that all of its lodges must be closed. Efforts by followers of the faith to overturn the prohibition on the recording of their faith in official documents, which had been imposed under the former regime, had so far been unsuccessful.

47. Freedom of expression, which was considered a central pillar of the democratic structure of the State, was guaranteed under article 38 of the 2005 Constitution. The Government fully complied with its obligations in that regard. All decrees enacted by the Revolutionary Command Council that criminalized freedom of expression had been rescinded and there were no longer any restrictions on the establishment of media organizations or access to satellite and Internet services, for example.

48. Ms. Cleveland said that she would welcome replies to concerns that she had raised at the previous meeting regarding the steps taken to tackle discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons from acts of violence. She was grateful for the information provided by the delegation on the bill on domestic violence, including the criminal penalties that could be imposed. Which legal standard was applied to make a perpetrator of domestic violence subject to those penalties? In view of the large number of stateless persons in Iraq, she asked what plans the State party had to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and to bring its domestic laws into line with those treaties in order better to protect the rights of stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness. Finally, she wished to know what steps the authorities were taking to reform the practice of punishing former victims of sex trafficking for things they had done under duress.

49. While she appreciated the information provided by the delegation regarding the independence of the judiciary, reports before the Committee nonetheless indicated that in practice, the judiciary was neither impartial nor independent, and that frequent and fundamental violations of fair trial guarantees occurred, particularly in terrorism cases. The Committee was also concerned at widespread reports of threats to defence counsel; cases in which public officials had declared individuals guilty before they were tried, in violation of the presumption of innocence; and cases of persons being convicted and sentenced to death in egregiously deficient legal proceedings, in violation of article 6 of the Covenant. The Committee was particularly concerned about a judgement issued in July 2015 by the Central Criminal Court of Iraq in Baghdad which had imposed death sentences on 24 men under the Anti-Terrorism Act following a trial that had reportedly lasted only a few hours. The proceedings had relied on confessions allegedly extracted under torture, and the defendants’ counsel had not been of their own choosing. She would therefore appreciate information regarding the status of that judgement. More broadly, she requested information regarding the efforts that the State party was taking to ensure access to qualified counsel of a person’s choice and to respect the presumption of innocence, the right to appeal and other fundamental fair trial guarantees, particularly in terrorism cases.

50. Mr. Ben Achour said that he found it difficult to reconcile the delegation’s statement that there was no link between politics and religion in any of the provisions of the Constitution with the fact that the Constitution established Islam as the official State religion and sharia law as a fundamental source of legislation. He would like to know how the practice of not allowing followers of the Baha’i faith to indicate their religion on their identity cards could be considered to be compatible with articles 17, 18 and 26 of the Covenant.
51. **Mr. Iwasawa** said that he was pleased to note that the State party was willing to amend or rescind those articles of the Criminal Code that permitted discrimination against women and expressed the hope that measures would be taken to that end as soon as possible. He would appreciate answers to the questions raised concerning early and forced marriages and the decriminalization of defamation in paragraphs 6 and 21 of the list of issues. He would also welcome comments on the fact that under the Criminal Code it was an offence to publicly insult the Government.

52. **Mr. Bouzid** reiterated an earlier question on the status of the draft law on refugees.

53. **Mr. Muhumuza** asked whether any steps were being taken to remove all the discriminatory restrictions on the freedom of worship of followers of the Baha’i faith that had been established under the former regime. He would welcome the delegation’s comments on reports that shelters for victims of violence, including domestic violence, were not officially sanctioned or supported by the authorities.

54. **Mr. de Frouville** said that he hoped that the Government would consider re-establishing the Ministry of Human Rights, given that body’s role as a valuable interlocutor with civil society and its symbolic significance. He had not been entirely convinced by the delegation’s arguments in favour of retaining the death penalty, in particular since the penalty was often imposed following trials that failed to meet fair trial guarantees and that were based on confessions obtained through torture. In view of such deficiencies, it was essential that judges should ensure that legislation governing the conduct of trials was effectively enforced in practice. He asked the delegation to clarify the whereabouts of Mr. Mohammed Abbas Kadhim Al Sudani between the time that he was arrested on 18 November 2014 and the time that his mother was informed of his place of detention on 4 May 2015.

55. **Ms. Waterval** asked whether there were any measures in place to provide treatment for perpetrators of acts of domestic violence and, if not, whether the Government would consider including provisions to that end in the bill on domestic violence.

56. **Mr. Ismail** (Iraq) said that the delegation would provide written replies within 48 hours to the questions that it had not had time to answer. He wished to express his thanks to the Committee for their questions, observations and interest in the situation in Iraq.

57. **The Chairperson** said that he wished, on his own behalf and on that of the Committee, to express solidarity with the Government and people of Iraq in their efforts to deal with the major challenges facing the country, which should of course be met in a manner that was fully compliant with international human rights standards, including the Covenant. The lack of examples of the implementation of the Covenant indicated that more work remained to be done in ensuring that the Covenant was applied in practice. For example, it was important that the State party should take action to eliminate gender stereotyping with a view to promoting women’s participation in public life. Steps should be taken to ensure that the due process guarantees enshrined in legislation were effectively upheld by the competent authorities. The Committee’s general comment No. 32 on the right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial provided valuable guidelines in that regard. Action should also be taken to safeguard the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which was a non-derogable right under the Covenant. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the State party would shortly be in a position to accede to the First Optional Protocol to the Covenant.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*