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A very good afternoon, Distinguished Colleagues, Committee Members of the Human Rights Committee, Distinguished Delegation, representatives of academia, civil society and to all those accompanying us online over the course of this dialogue. I would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone to the 141 st session of the Human Rights Committee and I would like to call to order meeting number 4130. In this meeting we will be undertaking our consideration of the fourth periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic which is presented under the ordinary reporting procedure. The report, the list of issues and the responses to the list of issues as well as all documents linked to this dialogue including inputs from civil society can be found online. During this dialogue questions will be asked from Committee Members where colleagues would like more information regarding what has been submitted by the State Party and information from civil society as well. Head of Delegation, Excellency, in addition to extending our warm greetings we would like to inform you that the Delegation may take the floor for 15 minutes for its opening remarks and we will then hear from colleagues on the list of speakers. The Delegation will subsequently have a ten-minute break to organize its responses and then 28 minutes in which to respond. Following that time colleagues will ask follow-up questions and the Delegation once again will have an opportunity to respond. Without further ado let me give the floor to the Head of Delegation, His Excellency Haider Ali Ahmed. Please go ahead, sir. Thank you, Madam Chair. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Committee, good afternoon. Let me begin by introducing to you the members of the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic that will participate in the discussion sessions of the fourth national report submitted under the international covenant on civil and political rights. His Excellency Ambassador Director of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and judge in the ministry of justice, Dr. Yasir Kelsey, legal expert, Ministry of Interior, colleague Dr. Khawla Yusuf from the permanent mission, Dr. Mahal Malindi, professor lecturer in the Department of International Law from the University of Damascus and Dr. Mr. Hossam Georges representing the Ministry of Social Affairs and Mr. Nader Sheikh Ali representative of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission and Fareed Jumbert from the Department of International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Syrian Arab Republic submits this report as an overview of the progress achieved in the context of implementing the provisions of the international covenant at the national level since the previous report. The report was prepared through a participatory approach in which several government sectors were represented. Members of the People's Assembly, the Bar Association and representatives of non-governmental organizations also participated in this process to expand the perspective of the process of monitoring and implementing the covenant at the international level. The report covers an exceptional time that the country went through and is still experiencing some of its chapters and facing its challenges that have left profound and direct impacts on all the rights covered by the covenant and on national efforts aimed at respecting, protecting, implementing them. It is well known that the Syrian Arab Republic has faced since 2011 persistent attempts which are still ongoing by a group of countries to target the Syrian state, destabilize it and undermine the rights of its people in which all means were used to achieve these goals, especially military, political, media and economic means. Syria faced a war whose tools were terrorist armed groups, the majority of which are on the Security Council's list of designated terrorist organizations which attracted tens of thousands of foreign terrorists from more than 100 countries to their ranks and provided them with these means. Countries provided financial logistical and media support and were accompanied by public and explicit calls for these groups to kill the Syrian people, destroy the infrastructure, violate all their human rights and incite discrimination, hostility and violence. It goes without saying that terrorism has grave impacts on the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably the right to life in addition to the full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and threatens the territorial integrity and security of states, the stability of governments and the rule of law. This was accompanied by direct aggression by the so-called international coalition that was formed and led illegally by the United States. In addition to the Israeli occupation to the Syrian Arab Gulen and its continued attacks against the territory and sovereignty of Syria and the associated targeting of civilian facilities and infrastructure and the continuous plundering of Syrian wealth, especially oil, wheat, water and other basic resources which is a direct violation of the principle of permanent sovereignty of peoples over their natural resources and a flagrant violation to the rights protected in the covenant. Under its national duty and its constitution, the Syrian Arab Republic confronted this terrorist war on several fronts and worked to restore security and stability to Syrian territories. The national priority became to protect civilians, guarantee their basic rights, ensure the provision of their basic needs and access to humanitarian aid without discrimination to all Syrian territory including areas in the northwest and northeast of the country that are still under the control of the terrorist and the US and Turkish occupation. Syria is exerting all efforts to address their precautions of war and aggression and ensure the sovereignty and independence of Syria and the unity and integrity of its territories in accordance with international law, UN charter. Despite the gravity of these challenges, Syria preserves its commitment to the provisions of international covenant and works to address emerging challenges in its implementation guarantee the rights and freedoms recognized in the covenant at the national level and affirm its stipulations of recognizing the inherent dignity of members of the entire human family and equal and inalienable rights in accordance with the principles of UN charter as well as to abide by its commitment under UN charter to promote the universal respect for the observance of human rights and freedoms and to provide conditions to enable every citizen to enjoy civil political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. The period covered by the report witnessed legislative and institutional challenges, changes that can be described as major or radical in response to the specificity of national context. The most prominent of which was the adoption of the 2012 constitution which is the general umbrella for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms including the principles of non-discrimination, citizenship, the rule of law, equal opportunities, political and party pluralism and the protection of unity, culture, diversity, social justice and equality and within a perspective that achieves a balance between the rights of the individual and its duties towards other individuals and the groups as well and the duties of the state on the other hand. My country has sought through the two documents, the national report and the response to the list of issues to summarize the efforts aimed at continuing the implementation of the legislative and judicial guarantees of rights and fundamental freedoms recognized in the international covenant and to guarantee the right of the citizen to contribute to political, economic, social and cultural life and to ensure the continued functioning of institutions to serve achieving this goal including the judicial institutions is to ensure the provision of effective means of remedies, guarantees of the rights, means of appeal, review and defense before the judiciary as enshrined in legislation despite the targeting by terrorist armed groups to these institutions and its personnel in several regions. The constitutional elections were organized on time and appropriate measures were taken to ensure participation inside and outside the country. The Syrian Arab Republic has strengthened the general framework for the protection of the rights enshrined in the covenant by reviewing and updating the legislative and institutional frameworks related to the prevention and response to certain crimes that would affect the rights stipulated in the covenant through an approach based on prevention, protection and accountability including, for example, cases concerning the issue of torture and undermining freedom and personal safety. Some institutions were reshaped and their competencies were revised including the Supreme Constitutional Court. The particularity of the national context required the implementation of measures of a special character including taking national reconciliation procedures and the issuance of more than 20 amnesty decrees during the period between 2011 and 2023 from which a large number of detainees, convicts and fugitives benefited. This was a reflection of the Syrian state's keenness to stop the bleeding of Syrian blood and a continuation of its commitment to a political solution in which Syrians alone decide the future of their country without external interference and which guarantees Syria's sovereignty and unity of land and people to strengthen the structure of national institutions and their resilience and the mechanisms for addressing the challenges. Syria continues to implement the administrative reform program organizing and developing the public sector, strengthening the legislative and regulatory environment for supervisory work and providing its work requirements. Efforts to address the conditions of refugees and IDPs should also continue and work is being done to review and evaluate them continuously to provide the appropriate environment to protect all their rights and encourage voluntary return. The report and response to the list of issues present an overview of amending a number of laws aimed at ensuring equality between men and women in issues related to personal status eliminating any discrimination against women in the penal code and providing all opportunities that allow them to contribute effectively and fully to political economic social and cultural life. The Syrian Arab Republic continues to take all necessary measures to protect the family and strengthen its bonds as it is the natural and basic social unit and to address the special challenges emanating from the circumstances that the country has gone through. It is worth noting that the Syrian Arab Republic recently submitted its fifth periodic report and looks forward to continuing the constructive dialogue with the Committee concerned in this regard. Ladies and gentlemen, one of the most prominent challenges that our world is facing today is the decline of the rule of law at the international level and the persistent efforts by some countries to impose their economic and political systems and social values on other countries and to impose their unilateral interpretations of the rule of international law including the text of the international covenant on civil and political rights in addition to the blatant exploitation of noble human rights causes and using it irresponsibly to to threaten the fate of entire peoples. The Syrian Arab Republic has faced this approach in its most dangerous forms as some countries through mechanisms established under the guise of human rights have continued to spread allegations to hide their destructive practices against the country including practices of aggression, occupation, illegal military presence and support for separatist, malicious and terrorist groups and granting these groups certificates of good behavior as well as the promotion of illegal structures which is considered direct support for these groups and involvement in threatening the unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic not to mention the theft of natural national resources and wealth depriving the Syrians of benefiting from these resources and covering up the impacts of unilateral coercive measures that constitute a direct and comprehensive war against all human rights and humanitarian needs of all Syrians and terrorism that undermines ways to restore their security, stability and livelihood. Protecting and promoting human rights globally comes through the recognition that the primary responsibility for this lies with the state concerned and these efforts must be supported through optimal investment in the tools of international dialogue and cooperation based on the respect of the international law and respect for the specificity of the national context of the state concerned and its needs and priorities. The Syrian Arab Republic continues its efforts to strengthen, improve and develop national legislative and institutional frameworks related to human rights in accordance with its international obligations under international human rights law to achieve the protection, respect and implementation of all these rights for all its people without distinction and expresses its sincere hope to engage in an objective, impartial and constructive dialogue with the members of the Committee to contribute to the optimal manner the provisions of the covenant at the national level. Thank you. Thank you very much indeed, Head of Delegation. Thank you very much, sir, for having given your opening remarks which I am sure will really lay the backdrop and set out the context that the Committee can then use as we undertake our dialogue. Let me kick off with the first speaker on my list, Ms. Tigrouji, you have the floor. Thank you very much indeed, Madam Chairperson. I should like to welcome the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic and thank the State Party both for having submitted its fourth periodic report and for their responses to the list of issues. Our most recent concluding observations were adopted in 2005 and we know as you well recall, the head of Delegations there, the Syrian society has been deeply stricken since that time as you noted particularly from 2011 due to the armed conflict which is ongoing today and more recently by the earthquake in 2023. Our Committee is therefore grateful and very much recognizing the Syrian Arab Republic for having undertaken this dialogue with us which we do hope will be frank, open and constructive. Before I address matters of substance, I would like to make two initial remarks which very much tie in with what you were just saying, sir. The first concerns our methodology in preparing both the list of issues and the dialogue. We wish to exchange with the State on the basis of reliable, objective and consistent information as the Chairperson reminded us. The reports that we use are available on the Committee's website. On the basis of this information over these two days, we will be asking questions and I really want to stress that these are questions, they are not accusations in any way, shape or form. The Committee is not a tribunal or court. We are here solely to discuss with you and to better understand how the covenant is applied in the State Party and what are the potential obstacles that you might be encountering. That leads me to my second comment. Like the CMW Committee on the migrant workers and the Committee on the rights of the child said in their concluding observations which were adopted in 2022 and 2019 respectively, our Committee is fully aware of the grave effects that you have just reminded us about, serious destabilizing ongoing and persistent effects caused by the armed conflict, the presence of armed groups, terrorist groups, militia, criminal groups, foreign forces, the effect that all of these have on the enjoyment and exercise of civil and political rights by the people of Syria as well as the problems that the State Party has encountered in ensuring implementation of the covenant in territories which are not under the control of the states such as Syria and Golan occupied by Israel since 1967. We are also aware as you recalled that unilateral coercive measures applied against Syria seriously affect the population and indeed the most vulnerable categories and this over a long time now. It is important, however, to recall that the covenant does continue to apply in these situations of conflict and occupation and instability and in combination with or in light of the humanitarian law as we will see. So we have prepared for this dialogue bearing in mind the very specifically complex context of the Syrian Arab Republic. The State Party has not formally repealed or delegated any of the provisions of the covenant and we therefore consider that it applies across all parts of the territory under the state control. Now, let me begin with paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 for my questions for today, raising general and structural issues pertaining to the domestic legal order and coordination with obligations under the covenant. To that effect, I would like to thank the State Party for the information provided on positive measures that have been undertaken in the period under review and, of course, we take due note of them. Regarding these three paragraphs, 1, 2 and 4, I would have three questions or three rounds of questions to ask. My first question pertains to the fight against impunity and we will come back to this, myself and my colleagues, throughout our dialogue. Given the information on the grave and systematic human rights violations committed on Syrian territory, what are the specific measures taken by the state to implement a transitional justice mechanism with its fundamental pillars, namely, justice, access to justice, reparation, truth, guarantees of nonrepetition, but also other aspects such as preservation of memory? Later on, we will come to specific cases of serious human rights violations such as torture, secret detention, sexual violence or enforced disappearance, but first and foremost, my question here is a structural one. The Head of Delegation began by talking about this. The report of the State Party provides data on judicial proceedings that are underway, that are open, but the report is not sufficiently detailed and the Committee would like to hear from the Delegation about what I would call its judicial policy to combat impunity. To that effect, a number of United Nations Special Rapporteurs and the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances sent in April 2023 a communication to the State Party on the military operation known as Tadamon in the south of Damascus, a zone controlled by the Syrian armed forces which saw the execution of 280 civilians including at least 12 children who were then left in mass graves. Like our colleagues in special procedures, we cannot verify the veracity of these allegations. Thus, my question, what inquiries and investigations have been conducted and what is the judicial follow-up to these events? My second question is also an institutional one. I would like to thank the State Party which did begin to answer it in its report and in its responses to the list of issues. This question is on the national human rights mechanism and I have noted that for now, for the time being, there is not one in the Syrian Arab Republic but I would like to go a bit further. What are the specific obstacles to the establishment of a national human rights institution during the Universal Periodic Review of 2022? Many states issued the recommendation of creating a national reporting and a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up to recommendations made at the international level. So my question is as far as you yourself mentioned, Mr. Delegation, would the state be ready and prepared to consider working with the capacity building team of the High Commissioner's office, if need be, to put in place this national reporting mechanism? Very early on in 1969, and if I understood the way in which domestic law works, your legal regime is dualist, unless I am mistaken, but in the report, I was struggling to understand exactly how the covenant applies in domestic courts and in domestic law. And I am not entirely sure, and I am confessing this very honestly, I am not entirely sure that I have understood the reference to Article 25 of the civil code, which I read, as well as Article 311 of the code of civil procedure, which I have also read, which I do not understand as pertaining to the issue of implementation of human rights treaties. In the constitution, which I have had access to as well, there is no specific provision on the hierarchy between international treaties ratified by your state in full sovereignty and domestic law. I have understood that there are provisions on ratification procedures and international treaties, but there's nothing specific on their implementation in domestic legal order. Our committee would also like information from you regarding the introduction in domestic law or the incorporation into domestic law of the covenant, its place and role among sources of law. This would seem to be an academic question, but it is not actually. It is a way in which we understand how things work domestically for you, how it is specifically applied by courts, tribunals. Do you have any specific examples of areas in which the covenant has been mentioned or our committee's jurisprudence? Lastly, any examples of positive influence of the covenant or the work of the committee in your national legislation? My very last question to that effect pertains to the optional protocol No. 1 on individual communications. I have noted the response from the state party in the list in the responses to the list of issues, but I would like to know why or what are the obstacles to ratification of this optional protocol on individual communications and whether this is something that the state would potentially envisage. I thank you very much in advance for your responses. Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Gruger, for your remarks and your questions. We will now have from the second speaker, Mr. Gomez, please, you have the floor. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to greet all of those present here today and I would like to welcome the Delegation from the Syrian Arab Republic who is with us despite the difficulties which you referred to in your opening statement and my colleague also my colleague who preceded me also mentioned. I would also like to greet all of the other attendees in the room and those who are following us online. I am going to ask a first question related to corruption. In its reply to question 3, the state party provides information on the existing regulatory bodies such as the central oversight and inspection commission and the central financial oversight agency. The committee welcomes the statistical data on the number of government officials investigated by the central oversight and inspection commission and the amounts recovered. Could the Delegation describe the composition of this body? Could the state party provide information on judicial cases in which government officials were ultimately convicted for corruption? Have there been any cases of corruption in which a judge has been prosecuted and convicted? Humanitarian imperatives are of critical importance in Syria at a time when 90% of the civilian population live in poverty and it is estimated that over 15.3 million people have required humanitarian assistance in 2023 compared to 14.6 million in 2022. In addition, amid a deepening economic crisis, widespread corruption, and continuing crippling sanctions, some government officials and some non-state armed groups have increasingly resorted to extortion, detention, drug trafficking, including captagon and other illicit substances to raise funds. Could the state party comment on these allegations? Now, my second question will refer to the state of emergency. In its response to the question on this matter, the state party asserts that there is no law or decree that restricts the rights enshrined in Article 4 of the international covenant on civil and political rights. As a result of the 2023 earthquake, a number of areas that suffered significant damage were declared disaster zones without having recourse to Article 4 of the international covenant on civil and political rights. According to the state party, this means that the state of emergency was not declared and hence the ordinary laws continue to be applied. Nevertheless, according to our information, law 55/2011 extended the maximum period of detention without charges to 60 days. Practice showed that arrests usually exceed 60 days. This law also allows the police to delegate their powers of arrest and detention to any other agency that they see as suitable to do so. This gives more power to the intelligence services to arrest and interrogate political opponents and human rights defenders. This law 55/2011 allows exceptions to the safeguards on pretrial detention, effectively undermining the right to not be arbitrarily detained and the right to a fair trial. Although in theory, the state of emergency had not been declared, could the state party respond to these allegations? Indeed, according to reliable sources from August 2020 to June 2024, 4,013 cases of arbitrary arrests, 2,109 cases of persons forcibly disappeared and 285 cases of individuals who died due to torture were documented. Could the Delegation comment on this data? Lastly, my third question refers to counterterrorism measures. In its replies to question number 7 on this matter, the state party refers to a report on counterterrorism that was submitted to the United Nations in 2021. According to the state party, various measures were adopted to counteract the activities of terrorist organizations which Syria claims are in line with international law. Could the state party describe these measures and to the extent that they might interfere with human rights? The state party also reports that criminal elements and conduct classified as acts of terrorism are clearly defined in Syrian law, just as they are in the legislation of many other states and in Security Council resolutions. But according to information received, the counterterrorist act number 19 of 2012 contains in its Article 1 a broad and vague definition of terrorist act which includes terms such as every act, all acts, creating a state of panic among the population, disturbing public security, damaging infrastructure or the institutional foundations of the state, whatever the type of these means or using any tool. These are extremely broad, vague and ill-defined terms. Moreover, references to damaging the infrastructure or institutional foundations of the state in Article 1 are imprecise enough in meaning that they could apply to a broad range of conduct including nonviolent conduct, calling for democratic reform or peaceful assembly. We would also stress that these definitions do not refer to a specific intent to cause death or serious bodily harm, a requirement established by UN Security Resolution 1566 of 2004 aiming to prevent any kind of violent act regardless of its degree of violence which should be considered as a terrorist act. Could the Delegation explain how this provision is compatible with the principle of legal certainty enshrined in Article 15 of the covenant? Law 22 of 2012 which established the counterterrorism court does not adequately set out the key judicial guarantees which the court should provide in line with international human rights standards. The law states in Article 7 that the counterterrorism court shall not abide by any of the rules stated in the effective legislation in all phases and procedures of prosecution and litigation. The meaning of this phrase is not clear. This provision would seem to grant the court the power to establish its own rules concerning procedural requirements in the cases of terrorism, including whether trials should be held in public and the person should be tried without undue delay. Additionally, we have news that since October 2022, the counterterrorism court has issued 91,000 convictions, some of them death sentences. Could the state party describe the composition of the counterterrorism court and how criminal procedures are effectively carried out in this court and describe or determine, explain whether they are compatible with Article 14 of our covenant? Thank you very much for listening and I look forward to your responses. Thank you very much, Mr. Gomez, for your comments. We will now hear from Mr. Al Haiba. You have the floor, sir. Thank you, Madam Chair. In turn, I welcome the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, His Excellency, the Ambassador and his Delegation as well as the members of the Delegation in the capital as well as all who is following us through webcast. We will raise three points in my intervention, namely points 5, 8 and 9 that have to do with non-discrimination, gender equality and violence against women including domestic violence. Point 5 has to do with non-discrimination. I would like to thank the state party for submitting this report and for their responses to the questions raised. In the responses of the state party, it states that the legislation on work in Syria does not discriminate between Syrian citizens including Syrian Kurds who enjoy the same rights and duties enjoyed by all citizens without discrimination. However, the committee has received information that address various types of discrimination including discrimination and violence against communities of Kurdish and Yazidi origins. In addition, they report frequent detentions, ongoing detentions as well as ill treatment in order to extract confessions in addition to forced marriages and other types of sexual violence against women, especially among Kurdish and Yazidi women. Moreover, the Kurdish community continues to be subject of numerous types of discrimination in daily life, particularly on the cultural level. In addition, there have been additional information received regarding discrimination, especially after the earthquake in the Syrian Arab Republic and the refusal by the government to deliver essential aid to people living in Kurdish majority regions. They are tens of thousands of civilians, including displaced people in these areas that have not received assistance in terms of energy and other basic necessities. In the harsh cold weather conditions, people have been forced to use materials that are dangerous to their health, including plastic in order to keep warm. Thus, the committee would appreciate additional information on this subject and to shed light on the measures to be taken in order to address the matter of lack of equality and to treat all Syrians on an equal footing without discrimination, especially when it comes to the cultural aspects with the Kurds in accordance with Article 27 of the ICCPR. Regarding what we call the sexual minorities, including the LGBT, who do not enjoy any legal protection since the legislation in the state party criminalizes consensual same sex relations between adults in addition to the violence these groups face, especially women. This violence is observed in places of detention, checkpoints and in prisons as well. The committee would also appreciate that the state party provides more detailed data on current efforts to protect data on current efforts to protect these vulnerable groups, including sexual minorities. Now we switch to French. Those who have been victims, just checking the French channel, can everyone hear the French channel okay? All is well. The committee would be grateful for further information about any efforts undertaken to protect these individuals, that is those who are vulnerable. The state party provided responses suggesting that if a person who believes they have been victim of discrimination wishes to submit a complaint to the state party, there are safeguards in place to ensure that any individual who is in the labor market and has had their rights violated can turn to a specialist court. The committee would be grateful for information on any cases which are currently underway or any cases that have been previously tried with respect to discrimination in the workplace. Turning now to gender equality, issue 8, in its responses, the state party indicated that the law in Syria does not enshrine gender based discrimination into the national legal framework, in particular with respect to the law on personal status or the law on nationality. With respect to information that we have been provided with, there is discrimination against women with respect to passing on nationality. This is a question that will be addressed later by my colleagues and by Madame de Georgia. The question is the matter of women not being able to pass on their nationality to their children or their husbands when they have married a foreign individual. According to the information that we have available, women suffer discrimination and violence which leads to numerous issues because amendments to the personal status act by the state is contrary to not just the international covenant on civil and political rights but also the constitution that his Excellency the ambassador mentioned a moment ago. We would be grateful for more information about the national commission which was created to consider text related to discrimination against women. We would be grateful for information about any efforts undertaken and the outcomes of such efforts. With respect to the concluding observations submitted to the relevant bodies, in particular the ministry of justice, is the ministry trying to integrate all stakeholders and ensure the participation of civil society organizations? What is the status of the amendments to the personal status law? What recommendations have been adopted? We have received information suggesting that there are a great number of gaps in the law on personal status. In your response, you referred to a committee responsible for family affairs in the population and this committee is empowered to issue recommendations with respect to discrimination against women and violence against women. We would be grateful for more information about the work of this commission and we would like to know whether this commission has issued recommendations and what kind of recommendations. Do you perhaps have any examples of these recommendations? In its responses, the state party talked about the existence of a national plan to empower women and to bolster the role of women at all levels. It would seem that this plan is currently underway and we would be grateful to know what the progress of the plan is, what is the time frame, the objectives and what measures are envisaged by the plan. With respect to women's role in conflict resolution, as my colleague has said, particularly with respect to the armed conflict, the role of women has been highlighted as important by the security council. We would be grateful for more information and clarification on this matter. Issue 9, violence against women, including family violence. In your responses, you referred to a lot of important matters. You mentioned that the criminal code was amended in 2010 and 2011 in order to bolster the fight against violence against women. You also mentioned a comprehensive law which criminalizes domestic violence and imposes criminal sanctions in all cases of violence, whether it is psychological, physical, economic or sexual violence. This law is currently being prepared. We have been provided with information that the criminal code does not establish a clear crime relating to acts of violence against women and girls and there are no sanctions to deter perpetrators from such actions. We would be grateful for information about the draft law, are there any new measures that will be undertaken, bearing in mind the general context in the Syrian Arab Republic. Our committee has received information about Article 548 of the criminal code which allows perpetrators of crime a mitigating circumstance. We would be grateful for information about the so-called honor crime. It would seem that the sanctions do not deter perpetrators from committing such crimes. We are grateful for your attention and as my colleague has said, we are not a court. We simply want to have further information in order to help the state party to better understand the implement the provisions of the covenant. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Al Haiba. I think we can now have a break so that the Delegation can collect their responses. A very good afternoon once again, dear colleagues, those present in the room, civil society, academia, those following us online. We resume our dialogue. Let me remind you that this is a hybrid meeting with, of course, the technical complications that that usually involves. The Delegation has hopefully been able to overcome those technical difficulties and I give the floor now to the head of Delegation here in the room. Thank you, Madam Chair and sorry for being late. There are so many questions and we had difficulties communicating with members of the committee in Damascus. For the first question by the expert on ending impunity, apologies for the implementation of the covenant and its reflection in our national law. Mr. will respond to that question from the Ministry of Justice. Mr. Nizar, you have the floor. Can you hear us? Yes, we can. Good afternoon, members of the commission and good afternoon to everyone. I am going to respond directly to save time. As to the status of the covenant in our domestic legislation at the outset, international conventions ratified by the Syrian Arab Republic are part and parcel of our domestic legislation. Accession to or ratification of a convention is approved through the same method adopted for national laws and it is considered by the people's assembly. So when considering an international convention, it should not contradict with domestic law and once it is adopted, it is part of our national legislation. Therefore, I would like to reiterate the international covenant on civil and political rights is mainstreamed in the constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic and it is the supreme law. Therefore, all legislation are in line with its provisions. Therefore, national courts when implementing the covenant or implementing domestic laws take into account the international covenant on civil and political rights because it is part of our national legislation. Therefore, these provisions are implemented by national courts and they are part of our national legislation. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Nizar. As for the question on the issue of ending impunity and all issues connected to that, I am going to give the floor to Dr. Yasir from the Ministry of Interior. Mr. Yasir, you have the floor. Thank you, Ambassador and thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon to all of you and I have the honor to be part of the Delegation to review the report of Syria. This reflects or demonstrates our commitment to international covenant on civil and political rights. The issue of ending impunity was raised in different points as contained in the list of issues and from different perspectives. Therefore, our answer emanates from different lenses within the framework of ordinary judiciary or military judiciary. The Syrian Arab Republic pursuant to its constitutional obligations and in discharging its duties in defending its sovereignty and also to protect the security of its citizens and to ensure the operation of its institutions and based on such and in promotion of human rights vis-a-vis the provisions of the covenant, there is a legal, a comprehensive legal system in the Syrian domestic legislation related to ending impunity in terms of any crime, not only violations that are covered by the covenant but our penal code as well that was enacted in 1949. It criminalizes acts that are considered a violation of human rights or any attack against people or wealth and this is part of the penal policy of the Syrian legislator. During the terrorist war against Syria, a number of laws were adopted in connection with ending impunity including the prevention of torture act number 16 of 2022 and also the legislative decree of 32 in 2023 that stipulates the termination of military courts and referring their terms of reference or jurisdiction to a military courts. I am going to dwell on this later. In addition to other offenses or criminal offenses such as abductions and one of the members of the committee also referred to these crimes or using of such by certain people. There are a number of acts or laws and in implementation of these laws, we took strict measures in order to punish offenses, illegal offenses, especially when it comes to military operations. Therefore, the Syrian Arab Republic Armed Forces are subject to a legal system when adopting clear liability or accountability mechanisms including the penal code and the code of procedures, code of civil procedure. So these two codes define how people are held accountable for violations without any discrimination. So it is a military penal code but it does not discriminate in terms of belonging to the military, the armed forces. It was applicable even before the war in Syria. And this law was amended after the war on terrorism. One of the questions that was part of the list of issues is related to the rule of the military penal code. This code provides or entitles everyone who is subjected to such crime or any person who witnesses these crimes the right to raise a complaint or a report to the prosecution, the general prosecution. And the procedures are easy in this case. They are simplified. So these reports are registered in a special record and then investigations are launched and the military prosecution acts and then starts the case. I would like to note that the decision of the public or general prosecution is not a matter of immunity as understood by some but rather it is one of the temporary restrictions to enable the military to review or consider the offenses of military personnel before taking a decision. This is an administrative decision that is not related to penal liability because penal liability is subject is controlled by the public prosecution. We have also regulations and the decisions taken by the leadership of the military. So field leaders should take measures to ensure that personnel do not violate the law and it obliged those leaders without delay to take measures related to a referral or launching investigations or taking disciplinary action so matters are referred to the competent judicial authority. In 2011, a commission or a mechanism was established within the Ministry of Defense that comprises a number of competent authorities or departments when it comes to military operations. It comprises high rank official, military officials and officers who probe into complaints filed by individuals against military or security personnel and against the interior security forces and this committee was mandated to conduct investigations with all elements and officers regardless of their ranks. With regard to statistics, we have cited a number of statistics in the report and we would like to update these statistics now. We have noticed a decrease in the number of complaints over the past three years compared to previous years. For example, in 2014, the number of complaints filed to the commission were 94 complaints and in 2015, there were 38 complaints and in 2016, there were 24 complaints. Over the past three years, this number declined significantly. In 2022, only eight complaints were filed and in 2023, 10 complaints and in 2024, so far we have four complaints and also this is related to the decrease of military operations on the ground therefore hence the decline of the number of complaints. There are also a number of guarantees that safeguard that impunity does not prevail. There is the punitive and the military court that are among the guarantees in putting an end to impunity. I will stop at this point and I will follow up later in the next session. In case there are additional questions, I will give the floor to my colleagues to answer the remaining questions. Regarding the question on humanitarian aid and discrimination in their delivery and what the Syrian government is doing in this respect, I give the floor to His Excellency Ambassador Arfan Al Naib. Ambassador Al Naib, please proceed. Ambassador Al Naib, can you hear me? Your Excellency, Ambassador Al Naib, are you ready to answer the question regarding humanitarian delivery? We cannot hear you, sir. Thank you. I would like to welcome the Chair and the Delegation, the members of the Committee as well as the Syrian Delegation in Geneva. As regards the delivery of humanitarian aid to those who need it in Syria, there are mechanisms that are carried out in a transparent manner for humanitarian assistance to reach those who need it in harmony with the relevant resolutions and the principles of humanitarian action. The government of the Syrian Arab Republic has facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in all territories including the hard to reach ones and those controlled by armed terrorist groups. The government of the Syrian Arab Republic has facilitated the delivery of assistance by international and United Nations organizations as well as NGOs working in the humanitarian field in a nonpoliticized manner in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other Syrian NGOs in order for the convoys to be to reach the needy populations in a safe and secure manner for the humanitarian assistance that includes food stops and nonfood stops, medical aid, water, potable water and other hygienic and other needs for the civilians in need. The government of the Syrian Arab Republic has been cooperating with the United Nations to extend humanitarian aid and I would like to thank the three corridors, the three main ones in addition to two additional ones in Sarmada and Tal Abyakh. The main goal is to deliver humanitarian assistance to those who needed all Syrians of all backgrounds without any discrimination. This operation is being supervised by the relief agency that has been reorganized in 2017 so that the assistance is provided in a transparent and clear manner. Thank you very much. Thank you, Ambassador. Regarding the question asked by the experts on the Articles 5, 8 and 9 on the non-discrimination as well as violence against women and domestic violence, I will give the floor to my colleague Dr. Khawla Yousef. Good afternoon. Regarding some points that were raised by His Excellency, the experts on gender equality, violence against women, the empowerment of women and all related subjects, the report, the national report in addition to the document and the answer to the list of questions and number of laws, and different legislation that regulate this ongoing process, the Ministry of Justice has taken note of the work of the National Committee that is in charge of studying discriminatory text against women that were pointed out by the member of the Committee. The Ministry has taken note of those conclusions by revising a number of Articles as well as training judges on implementing them. A study was also organized by the Syrian Organization on Family and Population on early marriage which is one of the phenomena that the Syrian society is facing as one of the negative social coping mechanisms as a result of the current situation. Programme of action has been carried out on the national level to put an end to this phenomena and address its repercussions. Regarding this phenomenon, law No. 24 of 2018 was issued to amend some Articles of the penal code regarding prohibiting marriage outside the court in order to limit the number of early marriages. We have shed light on some efforts, for example, media programmes, TV series, workshops that are organized all to shed light on this phenomenon. The Syrian Arab Republic is keen to effectively allow women to take part in all aspects of public life. We have shed light on the two workshops of 2014 and 2018 and 17, we are referring to those two workshops in particular due to their importance and the large number of women who have taken part in those two workshops. Regarding national reconciliation mechanisms, they have witnessed an effective and positive participation by women who have taken part in the national reconciliation process and negotiations, be they direct or indirect. Regarding the Security Council Resolution 13/25, the Syrian relevant Syrian authorities have formed a committee to study this resolution and to prepare a number of programs and activities that are commensurate with its content from a national perspective as well as a draft action plan in this respect with the pivot related to promotion, protection, empowerment, advocacy, relief among other issues. As well as a strategic plan on gender equality to cover the period from 2023 up to 2030. The plan under consideration is being carried out. I would also like to shed light on the stereotypes. We have explained some relevant initiatives such as the Ministry of Education and the efforts it exerts to periodically review the curricula of all educational stages to be age appropriate in accordance with the levels of maturity to address the issue of gender stereotypes and school dropouts. There are also legislation related to the number of legislation that have been reviewed regarding discrimination as well as the honor crimes, the so-called honor crimes. The mitigating factor has been removed from the Syrian constitution in order to subject them strictly to the strict provisions of the law without exceptions. As for violence against women in particular, the constitution is the main umbrella of a number of legislation and legislative and executive provisions. Article 54 is explicit in criminalizing all aggressions of the right of life or privacy or personal freedoms. It is criminalized by law. There have been some amendments to the penal code and other legislation in order to make the penalties more stringent and to enhance protection to victims of trafficking in women and children. There is an integrated law that is being prepared to criminalize domestic violence. Mr. Yasser is a member of the relevant committee and he could shed more light on the developments in this respect. The provision of support to the victims of sexual violence, the unit on the protection of families is the authority that plays the pivotal role nationally on providing a number of medical, social and psychosocial and legal services to the victims as well as rehabilitating the victims and empower them in order to reintegrate them in society by providing them with training programs among the main accomplishments that will play an important role in providing support to victims and connecting the victim with the relevant service is the system on addressing the case. It is an integrated system that looks into the cases on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with all relevant ministries that looks into the cases including victims of sexual violence. We also work on raising awareness by holding a number of workshops including for law enforcement officials, public prosecutors, judges and other officials working in this field. The fourth and fifth combined national reports in front of to be submitted to the CEDAW will address all the developments that have been achieved when it is time to discuss the report. Thank you very much. Thank you, Dr. Khawla. Regarding the question asked by the esteemed member of the Committee regarding corruption and the Central Organization on Supervision and Implementation, I will give the floor to Mr. Nizar Sadeghni to answer this question. Please proceed, Mr. Nizar. Interpretation will now move to the French channel. Thank you. We have been undertaking major efforts to tackle corruption and to ensure that this is monitored in the justice system. We have two specialist bodies, that is the Central Oversight and Inspection Commission and the Central Financial Advisory Body. We have been inspections in the sector as a whole including by considering all of the limitations and measures that have been undertaken and in the context of all of the operations related to contracts with the state. This organization is responsible for all matters related to corruption. The reports submitted by the organization are also submitted to legal bodies and in the report we stated the assets that had been recovered, I would like to give you a few examples. In 2018, the report submitted to the justice system reported 268 cases, 249 in 2019. In 2020, there were 273 cases. In 2023, there were 367 cases. As a result, the report submitted by the organization is submitted directly to the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary ensures legal safeguards when handing down sentences. Funds were recovered, therefore, by the state. There is also a central financial supervision body which carries out audits into tendering. Funds are recovered if there has been serious financial misconduct and if this conduct is tantamount to corruption and in this case, the case can be referred to the court. There are various structural reforms undertaken to bolster the administrative capacities through reforms. These reforms aim to bolster the integrity of the system and currently there is a law in place for the civil service, a new law, which will shortly be adopted and which will bolster the supervisory mechanisms for the civil service and tackling corruption. We are moving forward with the tackling of corruption in 2019. We created a body to supervise the implementation of these reforms. Strategic documents for tackling corruption have meant that we have civil society partners and partners in the private sector in order to ensure the participation of all segments of the society in tackling this phenomenon. A member of the committee asked a question about the accountability of judges and a decision was made against judges who were involved in accusations of corruption in 2024. Several decisions have been made. Several judges have been stripped of their office, specifically seven judges. With respect to financial justice, there have been decisions including decisions made by the criminal court against the most eminent individuals in the civil service. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Nizar. With respect to the question that you asked about allegations against minorities and specifically Kurdish people and Yazidi people, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Yazidi from the Ministry of the Interior to respond to these questions. Thank you, Ambassador. I would like to thank the member of the committee for asking this question. It is a question that needs we need to explain what is happening on the ground in a clear manner with respect to what some people have termed the Kurdish question. Based on the constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, we state that the constitution sets out the quality without any form of discrimination in the preamble to the constitution. We highlight the cultural and social diversity of our country. Before the terrorist war against Syria, we were all proud of this mosaic of different elements of the Syrian people representing a model for others to follow, a model of national unity. Now, with respect to the question of the Kurdish population, and the rest of the country, I am sure that you are aware, but I would like to note that by the end of 2015, Kurdish militia and separatists supported by the United States of America were in control of the northeast of Syria. They exploited the repercussions of the war and the terrorist war, and these militia have been taking control of natural resources such as wheat and oil. This is the Algeria zone, and it is here that we see reserves of oil and large harvests. But this area has been controlled by the separatist groups under the pretext that they are claiming self-governance and self-determination, so self-governance of this region in our country in order to implement their separatist agenda. In reality, these Kurdish separatist militia who control the schools and, in fact, you mentioned the question of culture, I would just like to emphasize this in particular with respect to education in the areas controlled by the separatist groups, the reality is that these groups have imposed their own educational program based on ethnic considerations specific to their Kurdish ethnicity, and this has had a harmful impact on the education process. These school curricula are taught in Kurdish while most of the population is Arab and therefore not Kurdish. Despite this, the Syrian government has worked to allow students in this area to access areas controlled by the state so that they can take exams in at least at the secondary school, higher school stage. The government will be welcoming a large number of students and pupils from areas under Kurdish control because so that these students can take their exams in areas controlled by the Syrian state. So I would also like to mention a misunderstanding about the rights in this area, the rights of the Arab people have been undermined by a group of separatists. Now you talked about the labor law. In Syria, the law on public officials or those working in the private sector, they both promote equality and the freedom to work without any form of discrimination. A member of the committee mentioned the violations of the rights of the Yazidi people in the northeast of Syria. Terrorist groups in particular Islamic State controlled the region and Islamic State committed acts of discrimination against different ethnic groups who were living in the region. They were targeting particularly the Yazidi people and this was also the case in Iraq, for example. On the contrary, however, the Syrian government has provided a great deal of support to these individuals we have received and ensure that they have been well received and that they have been provided with medical and psychological assistance. I would just like to comment on what Dr. Kahola said about interfamily violence. I was among those who was involved in drafting this law. So I can give an overview of the law. But first of all, I would like to confirm that the draft law does not mean that Syrian law does not include laws that criminalize violence. There has been in place since 1949 a law that criminalizes all forms of violence without discrimination, that is violence against women, men, minors, adults. It is part of Syrian law and refers to any kind of injury, serious harm or harm that may lead to death without discrimination. But you need to understand the circumstances in our country, in particular the violations that have occurred in areas that were not under the control of the state, particularly where the Islamic State was located. We had to find a law so that we could criminalize these actions. The law on interfamily violence particularly aims to protect members of the family. The law targets all kinds of interfamily violence, physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. According to the rules adopted, the standards adopted through the different conventions and the different plans for tackling interfamily violence and violence in general, I would like to highlight the positives. We welcome the creation of a unit for protection as well as shelters and the unit protection unit which was mentioned by my colleague. This is a unit that tackles violence in the context of the family against women and children. Through this law, we created a protection mechanism and mechanisms which can issue protection orders. We also created a department to tackle the violence in the family and specialist courts. However, this law has not yet been adopted. There are several stages and so it is moving from the legislative to the executive. The law will soon be promulgated but as you are aware, there will soon be legislative elections. This will take place on the 15th of July. There will be legislative elections on that date and the new legislative body will be looking at this law and I think it will be one of the first laws to be considered by the new assembly. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Yasser. Now, to respond to the question about the definition of terrorism and counterterrorism and the antiterrorism court, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Nizar in Damascus. You have the floor, sir. With respect to counterterrorism measures and the definition of the provided in the decree, number 16, we have decrees related to tackling terrorism and the funding of terrorism. In 2012, we promulgated a law to tackle terrorism and we also have law 22 which created a specialist counterterrorism court. The secretary general of the United Nations received a copy in 2021. There have also been several measures to tackle the terrorist activities in the Syrian Arab Republic in order to ensure that they have no safe haven and to ensure that there is no funding provided to terrorist activities and this involved confiscating their assets. According to Syrian law, terrorism involves sowing terror and violating undermining the state by using weapons, explosives, toxic products, epidemiological products and others by any means and by using means that aim to pursue the same goal according to the definition of the law against terrorism, the law establishes the terrorist means as weapons, munitions, toxic products, incendiary products. These are all considered means or methods that can be used to sow terror among citizens and to undermine the public order. The goal of the law is to establish the definition of those carrying out such activities through such weapons that these munitions or explosives is to sow terror. This definition was also adopted elsewhere. So we would like to confirm that the judges of the Antiterrorism Court who are tasked with investigating terrorist activities are ordinary judges and before and after their mandate in this court they are members of the judiciary. They are independent judges to ensure that they to ensure integrity. The provisions of the Antiterrorism Court can be reviewed by the Supreme Court of the Republic in order to review the decisions that they have handed down. The Court of Cassation is therefore the main benchmark and the Court of the Antiterrorism Court needs to ensure fair trial guarantees. This is pursuant to law number 18. The Court of Cassation oversees the sentences handed down by the court so this is a criminal court dependent on the Court of Cassation. Sentences handed down which are reviewed by the Court of Cassation are very variable. Let me repeat the definition. They relate to ammunition, explosives and so on and the measures taken by this court are overseen by the Court of Cassation which is the superior court and oversees the activities of the court on terrorism. I think we have I apologize if we have gone into too much detail on this but I think we needed to clarify this matter. We do have further pending questions but I think we have run out of time. Madam Chair, we would like to hand the floor back to you. Thank you very much indeed to the head of Delegation and the whole Delegation for their responses. We did want to ask some follow-up questions. We literally have one minute. So Mr. Gruger, if you can be as brief as possible, go ahead, please, Madam. Thank you very much. Literally one minute. I will not take any longer, I promise. Now three very rapid follow-up questions which I could have asked tomorrow but I will take the most of this one minute that I have. On the legislation regarding women, legislative reform, could you please clarify the rules of nationality transmission from Syrian women to their children and to the spouse and I am very interested in what you were saying, sir, about taking into account the covenant upstream so when there are bills, draft laws that are envisaged, could you explain a little bit more in detail how that works, how that is done? And my third question, but perhaps you were going to answer that tomorrow anyway, but what was the follow-up given to the communication from the special reporters on the Tadaman case that I mentioned earlier with the execution of 280 civilians? Those were my three follow-up questions. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Gruja for your questions and for asking them so quickly. Thank you very much to the head of Delegation, the Delegation for understanding the way we need to work this afternoon. That wraps up today's meeting of this dialogue and we will continue tomorrow morning with the dialogue with Syria. Have a lovely evening, everybody.

12 JULY 2024 (10am)

A very good morning to you Distinguished Colleagues, members of the Committee, Distinguished Delegation and to those of you in Damascus, representatives of civil society representatives from the academic world and those of you online following our dialogue. We are doing our utmost to get the logistics right to create this hybrid meeting. Can I just check whether people following online in Damascus can hear us correctly? Just to check to see if Damascus can hear us. Not yet. Thank you very much. I am delighted that you could connect from Damascus. Welcome to meeting 4131 of the Human Rights Committee. We turn to the questions put by colleagues. Our first speaker is Ms. Basim. You have the floor, Madam. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Given that this is the first time that I take the floor in this periodic review allow me to welcome the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic members who are with us here or those participating remotely from the capital. I would like also to welcome all participants and all followers on this occasion I would like to salute Damascus, the city of Jasmin and I pray to God that Syria will achieve peace and stability as soon as possible. In my intervention I have two questions on the right to life. Questions number 10 and number 11 of the list of issues within the framework of Article 6 of the covenant. The right to life is the supreme right that cannot be derogated even in situations of armed conflicts and other public emergencies that threaten the life of the nation. Article 6 lays the foundation for the obligations of the state parties to respect and ensure the right to life to give effect to it through legislative and other measures and to provide other remedies and reparation to all victims of violations of the right to life. General comment number 36 states that the state party should afford protection for civilians and children in time of of armed conflicts through providing shelter for civilians and those persons under its legislative authority or in its territory whose lives are affected by military conflicts or armed conflicts or similar situations. The implementation of Article 6 applies to armed conflicts that are governed by international humanitarian law provisions including the conduct of military operations and in view of the painful situation in Syria, I hope that you could provide us with information about the measures taken by the state party to protect civilians from death injuries or killing in places of conflict and also to ensure access to humanitarian assistance by civilians and to prevent harm by armed conflicts to their personal life. I hope that you give us information about the transparent investigations that took place regarding accusations or allegations of human rights violations conducted by any of the parties to the conflict since 2011 to guarantee that their perpetrators are brought to justice and victims have been provided with adequate reparation. Can you inform about the number of complaints received, related investigations, prosecutions conducted and reparations granted? Is there an official register to record the numbers of victims of civilian casualties in the context of the internal conflict? With regard to the earthquake of 2023 that hit the north of Syria, what was the number of casualties? Could you provide us with information about the measures taken to provide humanitarian assistance to victims, the number of victims as well as the missing persons? We also need statistics about rehabilitation in the post-crisis period such as removal of the rebel and providing medical and other services. What are the measures taken to protect humanitarian aid convoys, international or national convoys, protect them from being raided by armed and terrorist groups? A major issue, the death penalty is a major issue covered by Article 6 of the covenant which is the subject of the second optional protocol of the covenant. The reply of the state party to this issue and the list of issues does not differ from Paragraph 36 of the state party's report on this issue. Taking into account the different factors surrounding the death penalty issue, can you please provide information on the steps taken to revise the current legislation to ensure that the death penalty is authorized only for the most serious crimes involving intentional killing, that the number of crimes is reviewed and decreased periodically, that the penalty is never mandatory and that pardon or commutation of the sentence is available in all cases? Could you provide also statistics for the period covered by the report, designate information based on 6 and other factors and also the number of sentences applied and the number of people awaiting the implementation of the sentence? There were pardon decrees issued between 2011 and 2020 and also legal decree number 36 of 2023. On the commutation of some sentences, could you provide us information about these decrees and the circumstances surrounding their issuance and if similar decrees are issued as well? What are the criteria that govern the selection of those benefiting from pardon and regarding those whose sentences are replaced with other sentences such as imprisonment, does the state party intend to consider accession to the second protocol on the elimination of death penalty or also to reconsider a moratorium of the death penalty in principle? Is there a community dialogue in this respect where all relevant parties take place? Thank you. Thank you very much, Ms. Bassim, for your statement. Ms. Tigruja is my next speaker. You have the floor, Madam. Thank you. May I greet the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic here in the room with us and in Damascus following us. May I address 12 and 17 with you. Paragraph 12, may I revisit an issue we have already tackled, namely countering impunity but I would like to refer to a specific human rights violation, namely enforced disappearances. I note the answer of the state according to which the crime of enforced disappearances is not listed as such in domestic law, criminal law. Yet according to reliable sources since the start of the conflict there is a significant number of disappeared persons between 100 and 130,000 disappeared persons reportedly. Furthermore, it would appear that since 2018 the authorities are issuing death certificates for disappeared persons around 1700 including 2421 women without the remains having been returned to the relatives. The issue of enforced disappearances is closely linked to the issue of torture as well as incommunicado detentions or the military field courts, quote, unquote, which Mr. Gomez later on will ask a question to you about which have been admittedly dismantled but reportedly strengthen the practices of enforced disappearances by issuing sentences, incommunicado sentences against disappeared persons since August 2020. Reportedly there have been 600 cases of people giving, being given such sentences, 15 children, 19 women. It is difficult to get figures, reliable figures on this because there are no registers of disappeared persons nor known judicial procedures known to date but according to reliable sources and I am referring here to the work of the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, out of these 120,000 persons around 85%, maybe 100,000 disappearances are allegedly attributable to governmental forces. Furthermore, with regards to access to justice for the relatives of disappeared persons, my questions are the following. Is the state considering to criminalize this enforced disappearances as such by using the definition in enshrined in the UN Declaration on Enforced Disappearances as well as in the practice of our Committee, the domestic law on kidnapping, quote/unquote, is not an appropriate one nor is it enough to cover the legal and factual complexity involved within enforced disappearances as a crime against humanity. Question No. 2, is the state considering working with the independent mechanism on enforced disappearances in Syria whose budget was adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2024 and which is going to be set up in the next few weeks? In the meantime, is the state intending to create a national register for disappeared persons? The Committee has noted that have been set up, this is according to your information, in 2013, a bureau for disappeared persons that has been set up and a department for martyrs, wounded and disappeared persons but we do not know how these two mechanisms work. So anything you could tell us about them would be very welcome. Finally, with regards to the disappearance of Syrians and Lebanese in both states, the Committee noted the information provided by the state in its report, in particular the work on the mixed Joint Commission set up but you tell us nothing about judicial follow-up or access for families to the truth or to the fate of the disappeared persons and to comprehensive reparation. Paragraph 17 now, another crucial aspect in connection with the conflict since 2011. We talked about this yesterday. Millions of people fled the country or have been internally displaced and yet they wish to return home in decent conditions thanks to which they will be able to return, find their homes and decent living conditions. In this respect, the Committee welcomes the cooperation between the state party and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees which the Syrian Republic announced in October 2023 but there once again it is not easy to get reliable figures thereon. Can therefore the state share with us statistical data, updated statistical data on IDPs and persons who have had to flee the country on this issue? The questions the Committee wishes to put to the state party to go beyond what was said in the report and the list of issues are the following. What is the lasting sustainable return policy concretely set up by the state and in particular could the Delegation clarify the process, the reconciliation process mentioned in the report considered to ensure that people can return? Number 2, in the meantime, while you wait for the reconciliation process to be up and running, what special protection measures for IDPs and for people living in camps in territorial areas controlled by the state have been adopted by the state. So these are protection measures for IDPs. Still on immunity, impunity rather impunity, have judicial inquiries or investigations been launched against authors of serious human rights violations committed against IDPs including sexual violence, slavery including against children. Finally, still on the movement of persons, could you clarify what you have told us about the security empowerments or authorizations, are they legitimate or necessary for those persons who want to go home? Residents to go home need to secure several security clearances, first of all, an authorization to return in their home, number 2, they need to receive a permit or an authorization to repair their house and number 3, they need another authorization to be able to come back and live in their own home or potentially to sell it. Are these, is this information reliable, correct? And how are these requirements compatible with the right to private life, the right to family life and protection of one's home within the meaning of the covenant? Thank you very much, Ms. Tigruja, says the Chair for your statement. I now recognize Mr. Tiraja, you have the floor, sir. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. A warm welcome to the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic. This morning I will raise one issue, issue 13. The Committee welcomes the introduction of the new anti-torture law, law number 16 as a step towards complying with international standards. However, several concerns remain. Firstly, the certainty of punishment for perpetrators is questionable. The act lacks clear investigation mechanisms and in line with the discussion by my colleague, Mr. Tigruja, just now and yesterday on the fight against impunity, the Syrian law grant immunity to State Security Department employees for crimes committed during their duties such as Article 16 of the Declare, number 14 of 1969 and registration number 69 of 2008. The new act also fails to address decades of human rights violations due to the absence of retroactive application provisions. How does the State Party ensure prompt, thorough and impartial investigations by an independent mechanism in to all allegations of torture and ill treatment and the prosecution of perpetrators under this new act? Without retroactive application will the act address past violations or will perpetrators continue to enjoy immunity under law like registration number 69? Secondly, it also matters that the provisions on compensation and prevention are not clear in the law, in the new act. Can the State Party explain how it extends to offer redress to past victims of torture including protection measures for witnesses or survivors? Does the State Party provide comprehensive redress and deprivation including compensation to torture survivors and in the event of their death will their families receive compensation? What measures will the State Party take to prevent torture in detention centers and prisons in the future? Lastly, the anti-torture law, law number 16 of 2022 lacks an independent mechanism for overseeing and enforcing the law and its implementation. What steps have been taken or are foreseen to establish an oversight mechanism to ensure adequate enforcement and implementation of the anti-torture law and ensure freedom from torture and other inhumane treatment? Regarding the disaggregated data provided in the report, while the Committee appreciates its inclusion, there seems significant discrepancies between the reported data and the reality as noted by the various sources. The State Party refuses to allow CSO visits to monitor the country's detention centers exacerbate doubts about the accuracy of the data. Torture is reportedly so widespread that the International Court of Justice issued an order for provision measures in November 2023. The Committee has received information that at least 285 individuals have died due to torture with 29 deaths occurring after the ICJ issued its order. How were these statistics proceeded? Do the statistics cover all relevant parts of the entire territory, including retinues and individuals in government detention facilities? Does the State Party intend to allow independent monitors access to the country's detention centers? What measure is the State Party taking to prevent torture, particularly in light of ICJ's order regarding provisional measures? Lastly, the State Party has not addressed the issue of solitary confinement in its report. It is important to recall that General Committee No. 20 on Article 7 states that a prolonged solitary confinement of the detained or imprisoned person may amount to acts prohibited by Article 9 sorry, Article 7. Please provide information on this matter. What measures is the State Party taking to comply with international standards? Thank you for your kind attention. I look forward to your responses. Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Teraja, for your statement. I give the floor back to Ms. Basim. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I will move now to question No. 14, 15 and 16. 14 and 15 under Articles 9 and 10 on the freedom of personal security and the treatment of persons deprived of their liberties. Taking into account the relevant paragraphs of the State Party's report and its reply to the list of issues related to these two Articles, the Committee has received reliable information concerning widespread arbitrary detentions, the existence of secret detention centers, some of which are under the control of the state and armed groups aligned with it, and others are affiliated with opposition armed groups, militias of all venues sometimes are even under foreign states' authority. Could you please inform us on all measures taken to prevent such acts in law and in practice and to guarantee that detained persons under these conditions are free from the outset of their detention to access the defense counsel to be, that they are informed of their charges and their rights, that they have the right to contact their relatives and to have access if need be to independent medical examinations and the necessary laboratory exams? What are the guarantees that the state provides to the persons detained so that they could put forward their evidence of being subject to illegal and/or arbitrary detention? And what are the authorities these complaints are to be sent to and what is the legal procedures to be followed in this case? What is the maximum legal duration of detention in police custody and pretrial detention and what are the steps taken by the relevant authorities to ensure that this period is not exceeded in practice as well as all the steps taken by the state party to ensure that all persons detained are officially and duly registered and immediately after their detention so that their whereabouts are known to members of their families? Question No. 15, with regards to the information provided by the state party on the situation in prisons and places of detention and the efforts exerted by the government to reduce overcrowding in the institutions, could you provide us with some details on the release of persons with ordinary crimes and what is meant by ordinary crimes and whether this definition extends to all types of crimes such as political detainees, administrative detainees, misconduct, what are the criteria applied for the selection of the detainees to be released and those under the amnesty decree? Some reports from reliable sources as well as the recommendations with reference to the Committee Against Torture as well as some submissions to the UPR of Syria in 2011 and 2022 have deplored the harsh and extremely poor conditions in prisons, be it overcrowding, absence of hygiene and sanitation, malnutrition, reaching the level of starvation, lack or total absence of medical care and treatment when needed, the widespread violence by the prison wardens as well as prisons authorities in detention centers and prisons with a special mention of the military prison which is under the jurisdiction of the ministry of the interior and is operated by the military police where civilian detainees are often admitted. Could you please provide us with additional information about the measures taken by the state party to improve the conditions of detention center, be they civilian or military as far as hygiene, sanitation, adequate nutrition and potable water are concerned as well as the provision of medical care to prisoners with preexisting health conditions such as diabetes, chronic heart conditions, cancer and asthma as well as allowing family visits and visits by diplomatic and consular officers as far as foreign detainees are concerned. Could you please confirm that measures taken to separate juvenile and minor detainees from adult detainees that they are being adhered to and respected as well as the prevention of violent behavior among inmates and the provision of professional treatment by specialists for detainees with mental and psychological conditions to ensure that their conditions do not deteriorate? And what is the status of female detainees as far as hygiene, sanitation, nutrition and overcrowding are concerned? What services are provided to women with infants or children in a very young age, health and medical care including pregnant women? Could you please provide the Committee with recent statistics disaggregated by age, sex, nationality and reasons for the death when it comes to the detainees that have died while in prison and whether their family members are officially informed of their death and the reasons of their death and do they receive their bodies in a dignified manner and are they being provided with death certificates? What are the measures that were taken during COVID -19 for vaccination, prevention of the spread of the disease, the treatment and the management of cases of death as a result of the pandemic? My last question is related to the steps taken by the State Party when it comes to illegal migration, refugees and the elimination of human trafficking which are Articles 278, 24 and 26. With reference to the information provided by the State Party in its fourth periodic report as well as in the report to the CMW paragraph 233 and other relevant documents, could the Delegation update the Committee on measures implemented within the scope of decree No. 3 of 2010 on prevention and combating trafficking persons including the National Committee established for this purpose? In the State Party report, there is a mention of the composition of the above mentioned Committee and also a reference to a bill that has been prepared on illegal migration in 2020. Could you please update us on the fate of this bill? Has it been promulgated and put into effect? What was its impact on the ground when it comes to this issue? With reference to the efforts by the State Party in this respect, there are allegations that the government did not protect children from forcible recruitment and the use as soldiers in supporting roles by government forces, the pro-government armed groups and in some cases by opposition groups and terrorist organizations while continuing to punish them for crimes they were forced to commit or they did not commit at all such as soldiering and prostitution. Would you please provide us with answers with regard to this accusations and what the government does in order to protect these children from traveling to other countries in which they could face retaliation and hardships? Could you please provide the Committee with information on the activities carried out to implement the national plan 2023/2026 including raising awareness capacity building and training of relevant officials? Could you, officials, could you inform us of the establishment of mechanisms to receive victims' complaints and slavery and how to ensure that they are correctly investigated and that the victims are well identified and treated as such and that they receive all necessary assistance and suitable care and treatment? In conclusion, we appreciate the fact that the State Party has been keen to set up institutional cooperation with regional and international organizations working in this field. Could you please elaborate with further details? Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam Massim, for that statement. And we will now hear from our last speaker, Mr. Al Haiba, please. You have the floor, sir. Thank you very much, Chairperson and a very good morning, Ambassador, Head of Delegation, Delegation members. I would like to begin by thanking you for the answers that you have provided already to us yesterday, answers that I appreciated a great deal. Before raising item 18 with you concerning the treatment of foreigners, refugees and asylum seekers, I would like to put three questions to you relating to yesterday's answers. The first of these is are you planning to prepare a comprehensive law relating to combating discrimination? The second question, in terms of gender equality, I very much appreciated Madam Howler's answer on this note, stating that it was not to do with incriminating, criminalizing violence against women. What you were trying to do was to raise awareness and protect women. And I wonder in that vein whether or not there is a comprehensive program to provide education in the sphere of human rights, in particular around gender equality. My last question, have you organized a debate and, of course, this issue can be thorny in Muslim and Arab countries, but I wonder whether or not you have looked at equality in terms of Christians, Muslims and Jewish people around personal status in the area of inheritance in particular. And I wonder whether or not there is a debate, a public debate in the area of this on the basis of an open interpretation of Sharia Islamic law. And I will now move on to item 18. I completely agree with my colleague, first of all, I will say Madam Tagreja. Nonetheless, obviously we note that the years of conflict have left a significant mark in terms of refugees' context and situation and we do understand that fully. The Committee has been apprised of information suggesting that those returning to the country suffer from a range of forms of violence, in particular sexual violence against women and children, for example. I fully echo the point raised by my colleague Madam Tagreja as regards the need to collaborate with UNHCR in order to address the situation of refugees and asylum seekers. And I think and I was familiar with Syria before 2011, there was a regional UNHCR office there at the time and that is a positive step. The bureau still exists and I wonder to what extent you intend to collaborate with that bureau to develop a system for the international protection of refugees pursuant to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its additional protocol and also pursuant to your international commitments. Thank you very much and I look forward to your answers. Thank you very much and indeed thank you to all the colleagues who took the floor. We will now take a ten-minute break to allow the Delegation to organize its answers. Welcome back Distinguished Delegation of Syria. Welcome back to the conference room and, of course, welcome back representatives of civil society, the academic world and those of you following us on line. We now move on to hear the answers to questions put by members of the Committee. So time has been cut now to 35 minutes. You have 35 minutes, Mr. Head of Delegation, to provide your answers. Please go ahead. Good morning, Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee. Before giving responses I would like to note that the number of questions meant that we took longer time and we are going to do our best in order to provide concise answers in order to cover all the issues that were raised this morning. I will start with the question on detention and pretrial detention and all issues related to this in addition to forced disappearance that was raised by members of the Committee. I will give the floor to Mr. Nizar Saddikni, assistant of the Minister of Justice from Damascus. Good morning. Can you hear us? At the outset for the question related to detention and the duration of detention, I would like to refer to something that was raised yesterday about the implementation of the ICCPR and its mainstreaming in our legal or domestic legislation. It is very important. Yesterday we said that international conventions are ratified pursuant to acts that are passed by the People's Assembly and then they become part of our national legislation. In 2019, a national commission was set up to consider this matter and there was the were some guidelines for the promulgation of laws. These guidelines were circulated among ministries and these guidelines or this manual, I would say, includes things about drafting. So when preparing any act or law, there should be also foreign there should be aligning with foreign conventions or agreements that we have ratified. And this manual or these guidelines were circulated and in the Ministry of Justice, a training workshop was conducted for all relevant parties. There were examinations at the end of the training program and those who could not pass the exam were dismissed. So all parties that were involved in the training program and those parties or all departments that prepare legislation are committed to this manual or these guidelines. And as we said, the convention is ratified through an act or law and then it becomes part of our domestic legislation. I am sorry for deviating from the responses. I am going to refer to decree No. 55 of 2016 2011 on the issue of detention. Our judicial system includes judicial supervision over any operations or any processes. Article 6 of the code of civil procedure stipulates that judges collect information and people are held accountable. Article 7 stipulates that those who do these functions are the judges, prosecutor general and their aids. So other parties or departments that implement detention are governed by Article 8 of the code and they are all under the supervision of the general prosecutor when it comes to the when it comes to investigation of crimes. So investigations and follow-up of investigations is the responsibility of the judge. As a result, so these authorities or some authorities have no right to investigate unless in certain cases and they need an authorization from the public prosecutor. So again decree No. 55 and decree No. 19 amending Article 17 of the code authorize certain measures for seven days under the supervision of the public prosecutor and then investigations are referred to the judicial authority that has the permission to extend but the extension duration should not exceed 60 days. Therefore, all these measures with regard to this decree are measures aimed at regulating work and making it under the supervision of the general prosecutor and the judicial authority. So the general prosecutor is notified and he has to give approval and the maximum duration is 60 days as I said before. With regard to the issue of forced disappearances, the Syrian law defines the crime of deprivation of liberty that is similar to the forced disappearance crime and the penal code, there is Article 555 and 56, the punishment is aggravated or is strengthened as well by virtue of decree No. 1 of 2011. And it was amended by law 21 for 2012 and the sentence has become between 3 and 15 years if disappearance exceeds a month or if the person in question is deprived of his freedom, his or her freedom. Legislative decree 20 of 2013 was issued and it has rendered the punishment for abduction more stringent. Now, it has become life imprisonment and even execution if it leads to death or sexual assault or a handicap. Hence, the Syrian legislator has rendered the punishment more stringent in order to put an end or at least mitigate this kind of crimes. And we stress that the penal code punishes any case of arrest or imprisonment if it is not stipulated by law or if it does not follow a legal order. And it punishes any authority, any prison, any detention center if it accepts any person without relevant document that authorizes us and punishment would be between 1 and 3 years. Deterrent punishments have been issued in order for this crime of depriving persons of their freedom to be combated. The Ministry of Justice has issued a decree in 2024 that has authorized the supervision on detention centers and prisons periodically for the conditions to comply with regulations and to issue periodic reports. And at the end, violations will be punishment. I think with this I have answered the relevant question. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Nazar. Regarding the question on cooperation with the disappeared persons, we have attempted but any organizations that target a certain country is not accepted. This is a general stand without exceptions. We stress the efficiency of the Syrian relevant national authorities to carry out their responsibilities regarding disappeared persons. It is keen to cooperate with all relevant authorities within the legal national competent authorities. Now we move to the questions related to torture. Torture and all questions related on the subject and I give the floor to Mr. Yasser Kelsi. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. At the outset regarding the law on combating torture, this law, it is true that it was issued by virtue of law No. 16 of 2022 without dwelling into the details. I would like to clarify that the Syrian penal code included texts that address torture or harsh, the use of harsh treatment whether in interrogation or in other cases. This law on torture has put together all relevant aspects under one law. For example, we have Article 391 of the penal code that penalizes all forms of harsh treatment if the purpose is to coerce confessions. The law to combat torture has set clear definitions that are compatible with the convention to combat the torture to which we have exceeded in 2004. It has adopted the definition stated in the convention and it has expanded the definition to include the individual subject. Torture that takes place by terrorist groups or other groups individually or collectively, this is one of the main points that were stated in the law to combat torture. One of the questions asked by the committee member regarding the law to combat torture, this law is a penal law. It was promulgated to criminalize and punish the perpetrators of torture. As for practical implementation, the legal legislation in Syria is based on code of civil procedures and criminal procedures and this is the source of Syrian laws. For example, the French or the Italian laws. We have a number of legal texts on civil procedures, criminal procedures that regulate the mechanisms from the point the person is arrested through investigations by a judge up to the court procedures that are all regulated accurately by the relevant Syrian law. To answer another question, this law includes the guarantees on providing a lawyer to the person in charge, providing them with information about the charges that they are accused of. The member of the committee raised a question regarding compensation. As for the legal system in Syria, compensation for crimes of torture as is the case with any compensation, courts requires as stipulated by law, for example, the civil law, it stipulates compensation and the judge could address compensation in some cases but there has to be a legal text and an order to provide for compensation. If it is established that the person has been subject to torture, they are entitled to compensation. But implementation of such is up to other relevant authorities. Another question was asked about torture. There are many questions asked I have to admit and we did not have much time to research for answers. The number of complaints or if there are complaints, indeed, once the law to combat the torture was issued, it has immediately come into effect as well as relevant mechanisms for those who report cases of torture. There are a number of cases before the Syrian judiciary that are related with the use of force during investigations and some of these cases are still under review and decisions will be taken in this respect in due course once the legal procedures are finalized. When it comes to measures taken by the Syrian Arab Republic in application of the law to combat the torture and in compliance with the rules of the ICJ, there are a number of governmental authorities in Syria that commit to the Syrian laws and as a result, it has issued a number of procedures that stress the importance of applying the law to combat the torture accurately and not to be lenient in its application and there are also instructions to receive complaints related to torture and as my colleague stated about how complaints are received, they are received by the judicial authority. Complaints could be received by any individual without any restrictions and as I said, they are indeed complaints that were put forward and they are being investigated. They are even officers that are under arrest for having used force during investigations. I think I have answered all questions related to torture and the relevant law. If there are any follow-up questions, I am ready to answer them. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Yasser. As for the questions asked by the Committee member on execution and related issues, I give the floor to Mr. Sadikni in Damascus. The national report in article 36 stated that execution should be carried out in exceptional, rare circumstances in cases of severe in severe cases such as premeditated murder, the rape of children, violence that lead to death, hence the most dangerous of crimes in the penal code, they are it is clearly stipulated that the death penalty is only applied in these severe cases and the relevant courts provide all guarantees. The trials need to be in public and no sentence is issued in absentia. It has to be issued in the presence of the person, in the presence of a lawyer as well. It is not permitted to follow up on the case unless the association is informed to hire a lawyer if the person in question did not hire a lawyer themselves. As for a number of questions asked by the Committee member regarding the death sentence, as I said, the number of cases are limited. They follow the due process and it allows also for possible amnesty if need be. The public prosecution could also put forward the sentence to another court of appeal that may object to the case especially when it comes to death sentence. It has to be put forward to the court of appeal even if the person in charge does not challenge it. It is automatically referred to the court so for the sentence not to be issued by one court only on one level only. On the other hand, on the question that asked if this is compulsory or not, the Ministry of Justice is obliged to refer the cases to a court that is comprised of the highest ranking judges in Syria who review the sentence and express their opinion whether for it to be confirmed or substituted and so the guarantees are the court of appeal and then the president of the state and I state that all pardons issued included the mitigation of the sentence and sometimes its replacement by life imprisonment. Now interpretation from Arabic will move to the French channel. What we have noted is that many death sentences have not been in fact implemented but were commuted. In 2022, seven sentences were implemented but then there were a number of amnesties in 2023 relating to nine death sentences in 2024, five death sentences and one sentence was commuted and so we take into account all of these measures in order to limit the impact of the death penalty. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Nisa. Turning now to questions relating to the protection of civilians in the context of the war that was meted out against Syria, with regard to all of these issues, I would like to pass the floor to the representative from the ministry. Thank you very much, Ambassador. On the subject of the question put by the committee member on protection of civilians and steps taken over 13 years, obviously we would need many sessions to review this. I will try and be succinct and touch on a few key issues. With regard to civilian protection, the Syrian Arab Republic has a national and constitutional responsibility to protect its citizens. This is why our country believes that civilian protection is a primordial goal in its efforts to combat terrorism. We have taken every possible measure to ensure the safety of our civilians since the outset of events in 2011. We have given orders and information to the Syrian Arab Armed Forces to take every possible measure to protect civilians during military operations and most particularly to protect women and children. The Syrian Arab Army committed to respecting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a key principle in our military doctrine, in fact. Even before the war against Syria, information sessions were organized with international organizations in order to train our armed forces so that they can may fully respect international humanitarian law. This information and this training has continued to date up until this very month on an ongoing fashion. There is information distributed to the various military offices and ranking personnel in the armed forces but also to the police so that they respect international humanitarian law, in particular by taking precautionary measures and respecting the principle of proportionality in their fight against armed terrorist groups where civilians are to be found. Furthermore, the government ensured safe corridors for the evacuation of civilians from areas where terrorist groups were located. On each occasion that such a corridor was opened up, the corridor was equipped with ambulances and medical equipment as well as transportation means. We also put in place shelters for our citizens who fled the despotic writ of terrorist groups. Turning to documentation, under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior, the government has issued personalized documents for those who lost or left behind in flight their documentation. We have also recorded everything relating to civilian status including new births and this pursuant to established Syrian law, the right to have your birth registered as a newborn. In the sphere of education, we organized classes for children and have established a compensatory curriculum, if you will. So a curriculum which we call a B curriculum which is aimed to recompense children for the number of classes they lost when they were located in areas controlled by terrorist groups. This, of course, deprived children of their right to education and and this with a view to often enrolling the children, signing them up for military action and I will come back to that. In terms of the zones we have recovered from terrorist control, the Ministry of Defense has established an action plan to decontaminate these areas of explosives with the support of international support teams and a number of international organizations such as UNMASS and UNICEF working hand in hand with these partners, we have been able to carry out operations in liberated areas to decontaminate them of explosives planted by terrorists in order to ensure the civilian population can return to their normal lives in safety and we have figures we can provide to you in relation to the operations that we have carried out and indeed the weapons and explosives that we confiscated as part of that process. Turning now to combat zones themselves, obviously in terms of nutrition and health care provisions and core services for civilians, the Syrian Arab Republic has done its very best to ensure that core basic services such as health, medical and vaccination services continue and we have managed to create humanitarian aid chains which deliver aid to these locations despite extremely challenging economic situations which our country is coping with as a result of unilateral coercive measures. Of course, there is a lot here to present but I am doing my best to summarize the key points for you. I think one question was raised by one of the members relating to security authorizations being granted for returning to zones which have been liberated by the government. Now, these zones were under the control of armed terrorist groups and they are jam packed full of remnants of war, explosives and so on and so forth. Obviously, this has led to some delay in ensuring the return of civilians and this has been in order to decontaminate the area of explosive remnants of war. We also needed to check land and property rights in order to verify that people genuinely owned property. We can not just allow people to return to areas and move into properties that do not necessarily belong to them. Of course, to that is added the wide ranging pillaging that took place in these regions. The third question related to residence authorization, that does not exist. Any authorization that is required is to verify that homes indeed are those that belong to the people who are requesting to return or not. I am sorry for having spoken at length. Thank you. Thank you very much, Dr. Yasser. Turning to the question put by the Committee member concerning amnesty and amnesty conditions, I would like to pass the floor to Mr. Sadegni in Damascus on this point, please. This law's implementation is undertaken by legal and executive authorities and so when amnesty is declared the public prosecutor's office rolls this out across all detention centers across the country and in all prisons. As has just been said and was said in the report, since 2011 we have had 23 cases of amnesty. The latest goes back to 2023. The criteria we use are objective and so in other words, this relates to generalized amnesty concerning all persons who are perpetrators of a particular crime in different amnesty decrees, very often we incorporated all offenses of a certain type with some exceptions. If, for example, undue gain had been derived from the offense and the majority of crimes are, therefore, incorporated in this. There's another exception in the case of rape or rape of children. That is an exception but all criminal offenses are included other than that in the amnesty process. So for the amnesty decrees and criteria, these criteria I repeat are objective. They do not relate to individuals, they relate to the crime and in 2022 we published decree number 7 which enumerated all terrorist crimes with the exception of crimes that led to death and so all crimes committed included in the notion of terrorism were eligible to enjoy amnesty with the exception of those that led to the death of individuals. You also asked questions about detainees and prisoners. The amnesty decrees in the Syrian Arab Republic often take into account chronic illness. So if somebody is suffering from a chronic illness, a medical committee reviews that person's case and if it is discovered that, for example, we are dealing with diabetes or cancer or similar, in those instances, the punishment is completely covered by the amnesty decree and these decrees have contributed a great deal as was mentioned to alleviating overcrowding in prisons and it covers the majority of crimes with the exception of serious crimes as I say, for example, rape. Thank you. Thank you very much to the Delegation in person and Delegation for all of the answers given to the questions put by my colleagues, the Committee members. We do not have many minutes left but Mr. Terai has a follow-up question. Go ahead, please, sir. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Thank you for responses on torture. To be brief, if I am correct, the Delegation mentions that the point of new anti-torture law is to introduce a definition of torture compatible with the Convention against Torture and some issues such as compensation, prevention, investigation shall be referred to a general framework such as code of penal law and civil law. This is fine with me but in this case, I am still wondering how about a law regarding impunity and immunity. Are they applied to the torture case? The argument is as I mentioned earlier, the discrepancy between the reality and the law. As the data presented in the report is about what has been tried in the courts indicating just a small number, this data could turn to be an evidence that the State Party is not punishing the torture properly. I am also awaiting for the issue of solitary confinement. Thank you. Thank you in advance. Thank you very much, Mr. Teraira, for those clarifications. We will now turn to Madam Massim for a follow-up question, please. Thank you very much, Chairperson. I would like to start by thanking the Syrian Delegation for the answers it has provided in detail. I would like to put two follow-up questions, please. The first relates to separation in prisons between adults and children. The second relates to the situation of female prisoners, how are they managed and supported in particular with regards to pregnant women or women who have infants with them. Then I would also like to know is there a society-wide dialogue, I know this is not perhaps the perfect timing for this, but is there a society-wide dialogue concerning the moratorium on the death penalty or not? Is that not something that is talked about? Maybe to pave the road to wards and abolition of the death penalty or extension of the moratorium. Thank you. The Chair, thank you very much to you, Madam Massim, for that statement. We have just four minutes and four seconds. Head of Delegation, over to you. Thank you very much, Chairperson. I will begin where your question left off. Yes, prisons and everything relating to them. On this, I will give the floor to Mr. Yasser. Thank you, Head of Delegation. Prisons, this is one of the most important questions and it is one of the ones that comes up the most frequently within the Ministry of the Interior and we have followed this in coordination with the ICRC a great deal. Every year we have around 60 visits carried out by the ICRC to all of our prisons and these come under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior. Every month visits are hired through and after each visit we hold a team meeting between the ICRC team and a specialized team with the Ministry to develop our relationship and strengthen protection in prisons. So on the question of separation between adults and children, this is done comprehensively. Youth detention centers are independent from prisons. Thanks to the terrorist war, sometimes when youth detention centers have been put out of order by that war, we have set up wings within prisons which are dedicated to youth detention and also have set set up schools for youth offenders. On the subject of female prisoners, women's prisons are entirely independent from men's prisons and we have all of the necessary guarantees implemented in those prisons. In terms of children, the age is determined by the law up to the age of four or five years if I remember correctly. Up until that age, the child can remain with its mother if the mother wishes with no limitation. We provide to those children all the necessary services and the same principle is applied to visits, to healthcare. There's been lots of questions raised about medical care in prisons and that is indeed entirely covered and supported by the ICRC and this goes hand in hand with the efforts made by the government. We ensure all the guarantees that are appropriate and the Mandela rules are respected and periodically assessed in prisons. I had a longer answer but maybe and I think we touched on this during the first session but we can also submit written answers. On torture, so on immunity, in reality, the law on state security does not grant immunity in relation to prosecution. This was a provisional measure which grants an individual or the place of work of an individual the right to carry out an inquiry vis-a-vis that person and if the offense is proven, there is the possibility of appeal with regard to any disciplinary offense that is committed so civilian. This is a disciplinary tribunal really. But in terms of immunity, nothing prevents prosecution which is triggered by this process. There is no isolation used in prisons. These are disciplinary penalties that are used for offenses committed within prisons and the time is ring-fenced and this is set up so it is very clear preconditions which are governed by the Mandela rules for the treatment of detainees. Thank you. The Chair, thank you very much to the Delegation for the answers they have provided to the Committee and for their precision in time use. That was fantastic. And so we can now adjourn and we will see you again for the next part of this dialogue at 3 pm

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A very good afternoon to you. Welcome once again to all those of you who are here in the room and the Delegation in Damascus. Welcome to the members of the Human Rights Committee and representatives of NGOs and the academic world and anyone else following online. This is meeting 4132 of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. A number of members have put their name down to speak and Mr. Gomez is the first speaker. Thank you, Madam President and Chair. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Delegations to the members of the Delegation and anyone else in the room and online. Before I share my questions with you, I have three short follow-up questions to put to you, follow-up to those questions put yesterday and because of lack of time I was not able to put those to you this morning. Yesterday you told us about the Antiterrorism Court made up of ordinary judges from ordinary courts but who appoints them? Who appoints these judges and for how long? The law establishes a procedure, law 18 in particular, but what is its full name and number? I heard law 18, this is the counterterrorism court or Antiterrorist Court, what is its full name and number? Yesterday also we heard from you that there have been many 23 amnesty laws, one of which law 7/2022 refers specifically to convictions handed down by the counterterrorism court or the Antiterrorism Court. Could you give us more figures even if it is not now perhaps in writing after the end of this review? So figures of people who were granted an amnesty or a pardon and those waiting for a pardon or an amnesty. This is once again the decree number 7/2022. Those are my follow-up questions. Now may I put to you some further questions, the first of which has to do with access to justice and the independence of the judiciary and the right to a fair trial. The Committee welcomes the abolition via decree number 32 in 2023 of field military courts. The government abolished those courts and ordered that all cases which were previously under the jurisdiction of those courts be transferred to military courts pursuant to provisions of the criminal code and the code of military procedure enshrined in the legislative decree number 61 of 1950 and its amendments. So I have questions on that. Could you tell us about the cases that were before the field military courts, where have they ended up? And are you going to revise the criminal military code? Could you also tell us how many detainees were previously in field military courts, how many have been convicted and how many are now in other centers of detention? Does the public have access to those cases of those persons who were previously in field military courts and how can one have access to those cases? Could you, since the field military courts have been abolished, how many cases have been transferred to pure military courts? Also, the military courts that have received the cases from the field military courts, these new courts, what are they made up of? Who staffed them? Who appoints the military judges and what are the procedural guarantees in these military courts? Could you also provide information on measures adopted to guarantee in all courts, civilian or military, to guarantee respect for procedural guarantees under Article 14 of the ICCPR to guarantee to ensure that judges are independent and impartial both in ordinary courts and in military courts? On the 17th of December, 2023, the Syrian regime enacted Law 29, which is an amendment of Article 50 of the 1950 Military Criminal Code. Originally, Article 50 established that civilians should be tried by a regular criminal court and not by a military court unless the crime tried was related to a military function. However, Article 1 of this new law, 29/23, established or says that military courts will also establish jurisdiction over those persons who are commissioned into the army or into armed forces or into any military unit established pursuant to a decision handed down by a competent authority in times of war. This Article can be interpreted in the sense that the now military courts can try personnel affiliated to informal tropes or militias who fight alongside regular armed forces. Could this provision give rise to the impunity of members of informal tropes or militias if a civilian lodges a complaint against them given that officially a complaint against members of informal tropes or militias cannot be lodged unless the superior of the militia men and women give their authorization? Also, in the last 13 years, no member of military forces has been prosecuted. Could you comment on that fact? Question No. 20 on the independence of the judiciary. In your answers to the list of issues, the State Party explains that the appointment of judges and their promotion, transfer, disciplinary action, removal, retirement and the acceptance of their resignation must be approved by a decree signed by the Ministry of Justice and that the judges, the courts and the members of the Attorney General's office are appointed by decree by the Ministry of Justice. Could you explain how this system wherein such important decisions such as the status of judges and prosecutors are the responsibility of the executive? How do you guarantee the independence of the judiciary? How do you ensure that the judiciary is free from the executive? Article 133.2 of the constitution stipulates that the Supreme Council of the judiciary guarantees the provision of necessary safeguards for the independence of the judiciary. However, according to information received, the Supreme Council of the judiciary is under the control chiefly of the President, the general judicial inspectorate, the Deputy Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, the President of the cassation court and the most, the elderly advisers thereof. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice acts on behalf of the President and the judges are transferred like any other public official appointed in the same way. Could the Delegation comment on all of these facts? Finally, I am going to refer this afternoon to issue 25 on freedom of association in your response to the question on certain difficulties for the effectiveness of the right to freedom of association. The State Party points out that the Republic is a pioneer as far as civil society organizations and NGOs are concerned because it provides an enabling legislative environment for the activists of NGOs thanks to the associations law and number 93 of 1958, but this law grants full authority to the government to decide if an association can be registered or not and the government can decide to remove or disband an organization if the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor feels that it could harm moral, public morality or if the Ministry considers that there is not enough services provided by this association Article 21 prohibits associations from receiving foreign funding without the permission of the government and a regulation for funds raising of 1971 establishes that associations that want to raise funds must receive a permit from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Furthermore, Article 23 of the 1958 Act says that the government must have a representative in the annual General Assemblies and Article 26 to establish that the government can appoint a person to be part of the governing board of any association. In practice, the government has used the broad discretionality granted to it by the 1958 law to hamper the right of Syrian citizens to freedom of association. As a result, today, independent associations find it very difficult to operate without the explicit authorization of the government and that is why only those associations formally established under received protection from the law represent an extension of the state itself. Thank you for your attention. Can you comment on all of these issues? Thank you very much, Mr. Gomez, says the Chair. Mr. Teraiya, you have the floor. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Good afternoon. I extend my gratitude for the responses by the Delegation in the morning. This afternoon, I will address four issues. Initially, I will discuss issue 21, 22, 23. Following my colleagues' questions, I will conclude by the address issue 27 at the end of this dialogue. But this issue 21 pertains to right to freedom of conscience. The Committee appreciates the information on recent amendments to the regulation regarding mandatory military service. However, as mentioned in the previous concluding observations, while the state party allows some individuals to opt out of service by paying a fee, it does not appear to recognize conscience objection as a right. The Committee also notes the following information. In 2020, amendments were introduced to Article 19.7 of the military service law allowing men residing abroad to buy out the military service obligation by paying 10,000 after one year, 9,000 after two years, 8,000 after three years or 7,000 after four years. Has the state party considered implementing an alternative service of a non-punitive nature? Does the state party ensure that the option to buy out of the military service obligation is available to refugees who have left the country? Additionally, could the state party provide statistical data on individuals who were detained for the purpose of conscription as mentioned in the list of issues? Regarding amnesty for deserters and draft evaders, while the state party indicates that all amnesty declarations cover these individuals, the Committee has received information that some individuals were detained for conscription-related purposes prior to the amnesty for crimes of internal and external deserters from the military service. The latest available information indicates that the last amnesty declaration is dated February 2017 which extends the deadline for deadlines of a previous declaration from July 2016 until June 30, 2017. How are these declarations implemented and how many individuals have been covered by them? Issue 22 and 23 pertains to freedom of expression. The Committee receives information that the government enforced censorship of news site and social media content more stringently in regime-controlled areas. Regarding freedom of expression online, it is also reported that the Syrian telecommunications establishment and private Internet service providers implemented censorship using various commercially available software programmes. Decisions surrounding online censorship lacked transparency. Concerns have been raised about the violation of the freedom of expression of media with a critical attitude towards the regime. One example is that the media department of the self-administration Executive Council suspected the license of the media network on 5 February possibly because it had been reporting on protests against the self-administration in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic. Could the State Party provide any data on how blocking was implemented or which website were banned? Which state agency typically made the decisions? What measures does the State Party take to ensure the freedom of expression of media? Ensure freedom of expression, freedom of media, particularly when they are critical to the government. The Committee remains concerned at continued reports at attacks against journalists. Information provided to the Committee indicates that 1,670 violations against national and international media and media personnel had been committed between March 15, 2011 and the end of December 2020. Does the State Party have a statistical data on attack to journalists? Not only journalists but also human rights defenders, human rights workers, bloggers and media professionals are reportedly facing violations. What measures is the State Party taking into account to protect journalists and others from threats, physical attacks and other forms of intimidation ensuring they can exercise their professions without fear? How does the State Party ensure that those who attack or intimidate journalists and others are duly brought to justice and appropriately punished? Following to issue 22, issue 23 also pertains to related issues on freedom of expression. While the State Party report emphasized that all media in any form are independent under media act number 108 of 2011, their reports indicated that repressive registration has been introduced to censor press freedom and freedom of speech online aiming to tighten control over the public information space. This includes the number 17 of 2012, that is application with provisions of the law on network communication and information crime. Additionally, it is reported that new law establishing a new ministry of information, that is law number 19 of 2024 which was promulgated in April of this year. The ministry is planned to have extensive powers to oversee all facets of media sector. However, the exclusion of journalists and other media professionals from the drafting process raises concern about transparency and independence of the media. As paragraph 39 of general comment 34 mentions, State parties should ensure that legislative and administrative frameworks for the regulation of the mass media are consistent with the provisions of paragraph 3 of the Article 19 of the covenant. Could the State Party provide information on the law establishing a new ministry of information? Are the current oversight mechanisms in place in compliance with international standards and the Syrian constitution adopted by the Syrian regime in 2012 in order to ensure the international standards? 12 in order to ensure the independence of media. Regarding the decriminalization of defamation, the committee has received information that Syrian law imposes harsh penalties on criticism of government and security forces employees under law number 20 of 2022 on the criminal legal rules for information crime. This regulation increases the penalty if defamation or contempt is committed against a public servant during or because of their work. Moreover, the law is ambiguous, failing to clarify clearly define actions that would undermine the state's prestige or certain national unity, thus leaving room for interpretation in prosecutions. General comment 34, paragraph 47 notes that defamation laws must be crafted with care to ensure that they comply with paragraph 3 and that they do not serve in practice to stifle freedom of expression. It is also important to recall that in paragraph 38 of the same general comment all public figures including those exercising the highest political authority such as heads of state and government are legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition. Has the state party considered decriminalizing defamation? If not, given the harsh penalties, does the state party consider making the penalties more proportionate? Regarding the limitation of freedom of expression, article 19, paragraph 3 of the media act enumerates prohibitions on publications such as national unity, security, and news and information related to the armed and armed forces. However, these terms are so broad and vague that they may have a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of expression. Could the state party explain the compatibility of these provisions with article 19, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 of the covenant which expressly protects the freedom of expression? I apologize for taking the floor, but I am not sure I understand if there's been a mistranslation. One of the speakers spoke about the regime, the Syrian regime, and the fact that the Syrian regime has the authority to restrict the freedom of expression and to restrict the regime, the Delegation of my country, the Delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic. Here is the government. I would kindly ask the members of the Delegation to respect the terms of the United Nations and not attempt to politicize in any way the work of this Committee. Thank you. Thank you very very much indeed. Mr. Teraiya would you like to take the floor? I apologize my misuses of the term. Thank you. Thank you for understanding. Thank you very much, Mr. Teraiya as always for your flexibility and helpfulness. Mr. El Haiba is the next speaker on my list. You have the floor, sir. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you once again. May I thank the members of this August Delegation from the Syrian Arab Republic. Thank you for the information submitted so far. I have one final question myself to raise. This is point 24 on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. In your answer, answers to our list of issues you talked about decree law, the decree law which guarantees freedom of association, peaceful association pursuant to the commitments of the Syrian Arab Republic and the aim is not to prevent any of these gatherings. However, information has reached us about the excessive use of force in demonstrations. In 2023, demonstrations took place which were organized against or about to protest about inflation and the deterioration of economic living standards in the country and these demonstrations took place chiefly in a Druze majority town, a town where the majority of the population were Druze. They then spread and reached other towns, these demonstrations. We learned that in order to disperse the demonstrations, a real or live ammunition was used as a result of which according to some sources civilians were killed, 57 civilians including 11 women according to some sources which is why our committee would be grateful if the Delegation could clarify, elaborate on what happened there in connection with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and how all of this is compatible with the ICCPR and especially general comment number 37 of our committee. Furthermore, could you give us examples of prohibitions of peaceful assemblies or cases when demonstrations were dispersed through excessive use of force? Could you also tell us of potential cases which might have reached court involving these matters? Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. El Haiba for your statement. Ms. Tigruja is our next speaker. Madam, you have the floor. Thank you, Chair. This will be a last question from me which has to do with Paragraph 26. I am going to revisit an issue which was addressed at length by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the CRC in their 2019 concluding observations. I am referring here to something connected with the rights of the child. I will not reiterate everything they said in their concluding observations but the purpose of our review is to measure what has been done, if anything has been done with regards to Syrian children. In this connection in the light of the recent findings of the CRC and this when the CRC reviewed France in connection with a number of children in camps in the north of Syria which have who have not been repatriated, our specific question would be the following: What margin of maneuver does Syria have to contribute towards the repatriation of these children in these camps? This is not easy because European states must are responsible on this field and it is a concern that a Committee, our Committee had raised with Belgium and Finland, for example. But as far as I am concerned, I would like to know what the Syrian Arab Republic can do or is doing to help European countries to face their responsibilities and bring some of these children back. Furthermore, on the basis of the state's laws and on the basis of your replies to the list of issues, the Committee would like to receive more specific information on the following three points. First of all, the National Commission for the Rights of the Child which you mentioned, how effective is it and how independent is it? What can it do? Also, No. 2, children and armed conflicts. My colleague Ms. Basim talked about them briefly this morning. Now, that is a major concern not only for us, the Committee on Human Rights but also a concern of the United Nations Secretary General himself who in his report dated 13th of June, 2024 on children and armed conflicts reported a number of human rights violations involving children and these referred to murders, forced recruitment, sexual violence, forced marriage, arbitrary detentions, lack of access to education, et cetera. Now, of course, all parties of the conflict are responsible to a certain extent but my questions are the following. The SG reportedly welcomed the consultation between the UN and Syria to finalize a comprehensive plan for these children. Now, can you tell us more about this comprehensive plan for the repatriation of children? Can you give us details thereof? Finally, on civil status, this morning I believe it was you, sir, head of Delegation spoke about measures taken to ensure that every birth is legally registered, be it in areas of conflict or in the camps or in remote or rural areas. Anything you can tell us about the civil registry will be extremely valuable for us. Thank you very much, Ms. Tigruja, for your statements. My next speaker is once again Mr. Teraiya. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Once again I apologize my misusage of the term. Now, I will raise issue 27 which pertains to participation in public affairs. Firstly, regarding the third round of legislative election held in 2020, voter turnout was notably low. According to the State Party's report, voter turnout was 33.17% compared to 51.26% in the first round in 2012 and 57.56% in the second round in 2016. The Committee does not have equivalent information regarding the 2021 presidential election. What does the State Party consider to be the background for the sharp drop in voter turnout in the 2020 legislative election? Could you provide information on the voter turnout in the 2021 presidential election? Secondly, concerning the participation of women, the State Party provided data on the 2018 local council elections indicating that 1,094 women were elected considering that the total number of local councils elected was 18,428. This statistics suggests that the ratio of women is less than 6%, a very low number. Has the State Party taken measures to promote women's participation in elections? Can the State Party provide any equivalent data on legislative election and presidential election? Finally, the Committee also appreciates the information provided in the State Party reply regarding the Supreme Judicial Committee for elections and its subcommittee. However, concerns remain about its efficacy, neutrality and independence. Given the criticism of the lack of a safe and neutral environment, how do the seven members of the Committee and three members of the subcommittee oversee the national-wide election? How many members of the Committee and subcommittee are affiliated with the current government or the birth party? How does the State Party ensure the neutrality and independence of the seven members appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council? It will be also related to the previous issue raised by my colleague, Mr. Gomez. Thank you for a kind attention. I look forward to your responses. Thank you very much to you, Mr. Terai and indeed to all of those who have spoken. Mr. Head of Delegation, you have the questions raised by the Committee members and now the Delegation would have ten minutes in order to organize its responses. Adjourned. Very good afternoon. Let's regime our dialogue with the Distinguished Delegation from the Syrian Arab Republic and we will without further ado hear the answers to the questions put by Committee members for 20 minutes. Head of Delegation, you have the floor, please. Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Good afternoon to you and to all members of the Committee. Madam Chairperson, at the outset allow me to refer to a question that was raised more than once by members of the Committee which is the question on the repatriation of refugees. This matter is particularly important for my country. It is a matter of confusion. I am going to give the floor to Dr. Khawla to talk about the measures taken by the Syrian government to this end. Dr. Khawla, you have the floor. Thank you, Ambassador. Good afternoon, members of the Committee. The repatriation or return of Syrian refugees is a main objective for the Syrian government. Many efforts were made at the legislative and administrative levels. In addition to continued efforts to recover security and stability nationwide and to extend the control of the country and the rule of law and this is a good step that can be built on as part of the efforts made that were demonstrated in the documents that were provided. There are also amnesty orders, legislation and administrative orders to address any obstacles that stand in the way of achieving this goal. At the institutional level, for example, you read about the establishment of a coordination mechanism for the repatriation or return of Syrians and it played a role in helping in the voluntary return of refugees. An international conference was held in 2020 and invitation was sent to UN agencies and many of world countries partook in this conference. One of the frameworks affirmed by the conference is the rehabilitation of infrastructure and implement reconstruction of programs or projects and demining. Everyone knows that we cannot talk about sustained or sustainable return without providing basic services, especially education and health among other things. There are a number of notifications or announcements regarding those who left the country. All these communications are still in place. There were also orders or legislation related to this matter such as civil registration and also issuance of travel documents All these measures are being implemented. They are also under review constantly in order to address any shortcomings. As said by one of the members, I think Mr. Alhaiba said that a number of pledges were made in October 2023 at the 74th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The government endeavors to continue cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner to this end in order to address the concerns regarding refugees in an effective manner and within the framework of full respect for the sovereignty, the integrity and the independence of the Syrian Arab Republic. It is noteworthy that the Office of the High Commissioner does not have one office but rather other offices in provinces in order to facilitate the optimal implementation or operation of the work of the office in accordance with the agreements with the Syrian government as part of the pledges or promises made. We also worked on promoting the communication and consultation mechanism between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for better humanitarian action and for flexible and predictable existence of the office, especially in the main places of return. And taking measures in order to enable the refugees and the disabled, the displaced persons to take informed decisions when it comes to the destination they wish to return to or the timing they choose in order for them to return. We stress that creating sustainable and voluntary and safe conditions for the persons concerned requires the increase of support by the international community and rendering assistance programmes more sustainable as well as recovery programmes in order to address economic and social obstacles that hinder return. When it comes to allegations of discrimination between refugees and returnees, they are not subjected to any kind of discrimination when it comes to asylum seeking or residence in places beyond the control of the government. The rights and obligations stipulated by the constitution and other legislation apply to all Syrians without any negative discrimination. There could be positive discrimination by providing them with additional benefits. That is the only kind of discrimination that we give. So negative discrimination does not exist. Contributing in facilitating return has to be done in cooperation with the Syrian government due to its efforts in good faith and to stop any efforts to distort it. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Dr. Khawla. As for the follow-up questions put forward by the member of the Committee on Combating Terrorism and Access to Justice, I give the floor to Mr. Nazar Saddikmi from the Ministry of Justice. Please proceed, Mr. Nazar. At the outset, the judicial law 98 of 61 regulates the appointment of judges, the rights, obligations and immunities and seniority. On the top of the hierarchy is the high counsel of the judiciary stipulated in Article 130 when it stipulated that it is presided over by the head of the President of the Republic and this counsel provides the necessary guarantees to guarantee the independence of the judiciary and it includes the head of the appeals court, his assistant and high ranking judicial officials and it is presided over by the President of the Republic member, the seven members are senior judges, the most senior of judges who have been serving for over 30 years. Hence, they safeguard the independence of this counsel, something also guaranteed by the President of the Republic. The decisions of this counsel related to the appointment, promotion, transfer and disciplinary measures and referring to retirement is all subject to a decree issued by the President and not the Minister of Justice. This decree regulates the work of the high judicial counsel in order to guarantee its independence and it carries out a number of competencies that guarantee its independence. It is the body that appoints judges, their immunity, their promotion, their transfer and disciplinary measures imposed on them and it is subject to judicial inspection that is carried out by senior judges, highly qualified and experienced ones. Not all are subject by this counsel. It regulates the selection of judges. It is a five step process and it is all computerized in addition to written examinations that are circulated and are corrected by more than one examiner and then the results are being compared. If there is a great discrepancy between the results, they are being revised in order to safeguard transparency and professionalism. Members have to study for two years in the high institute, high judicial institute where they learn principles of integrity and independence. As for the follow-up questions, combating terrorism are regulated by a court, the judges in this court are high ranking judges and they are an integral part of the judicial authority, the judicial authority law on the first of July of each year revises the functions of the Supreme Judicial Council but in case there is need to carry out new judicial compositions, appointment is carried out exclusively by this council when it comes to cases of terrorism. Law 18 has not been mentioned. Maybe what was meant was law 19 or the law 22. As we stated there, judges are part of the judicial authority and decisions are subject to be reconsidered and revised. The law number 7 of 2022 stipulates all these matters, all terrorist acts are being regulated under this law. I mentioned that the appointment of judges and their resignation have to be permitted by the by a presidential decree and they are only subject to the law and their integrity. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Nazar. As for the question asked by the committee member of military courts and the civilians being tried before such courts, I give the floor now to Mr. Yasir Kelsey. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Allow me at the outset before speaking about the judicial authority when it comes to trying civilians, let me speak about the institution of the military judiciary which is the most important guarantee when it comes to military officers. It is a fully full fledged institution and one of the main arms of the judicial authority. The law has so law number 61 of 1950 has specified the crimes that fall under the military court. It is an apparatus that has military prosecution and military courts. The judges are selected in the same manner as the other judges through a contest for the graduates of law. They are subject to a number of tests until they are appointed as judges, as independent judges that are granted independence not due to their military seniority. As for the competence of this court, especially under the latest amendment of law 29 that the committee member has asked about, this law came to give competence, the competence of trying civilians to the ordinary penal court, hence matters related to civilians are no longer seen before military courts but rather civil courts. As for the legislative decree 32 of 2023 on the field military courts, such decree came to abolish that court and all cases that were previously seen before the military field court were transferred to the military court in its current state. So the cases that have been seen by the military field courts are no longer seen by that court and have been transferred to the military court in accordance with decree 32 of 2023. We do not have at hand any specific figures but we could provide the committee members with more detailed figures at a later stage. The competence of the military field court used to have limited competence related to the field military work. It is not a court that tries civilians. But in order to avoid any shortcomings, its competence have been transferred to the military courts that guarantee all rights, the rights to provide evidence, the rights to legal representation, all matters that were safeguarded by the Syrian constitution and other laws are being seen and are guaranteed by the military court. Mr. Ambassador, please, I give you the floor and I will follow up later. Thank you, Mr. Dr. Yasser. As for the question asked by the committee member on Al-Hawl camp and the return of children, I give the floor to my colleague, Dr. Khawla. Thank you. Regarding the conditions of care including the care for children in camps and illegal detention centers in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic, Syria has expressed its readiness to address this matter in coordination and cooperation with relevant organizations and it has indeed cooperated with a number of countries and this has led to a number of successful return operations. We have also accepted technical visits by the former reporter on combating terrorism and human rights and the visit has enhanced the improvement of this situation that implies large human suffering. We stress that the only solution to this phenomenon is for states to return their subjects without discrimination because some countries return only children or only women and they discriminate on a gender basis. So we call upon return without the discrimination in accordance with relevant international laws and the principle of respecting the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country concerned which is the Syrian Arab Republic. Some countries have visited those territories in an illegal fashion under different pretexts in order to support and empower such as the United States. Hence we have expressed our rejection of such visits. Partial solutions such as the deprivation of nationality would only prolong this challenge and in addition to the fact that they clearly violate international laws. We stress that all mechanisms that have addressed this matter especially human rights treaty bodies should be careful not to add legitimacy to these illegal mechanisms or to adopt partial solutions that would only prolong and add to the complexity of this situation. Dr. Yasser, thank you, Ambassador. Mr. Terai asked us a number of questions in connection with military service or conscientious objection also. First of all, military service is a sacred duty pursuant to the Syrian Arab Republic's constitution. This service is regulated precisely by law. So military service without any discrimination is in place. We talk about service to the flag. That is military service, that is service to the homeland, for the homeland. The law number 30 of 1970 and its amendments that regulates all of this, several decrees since then have amended the military service. Law 37 of 2023 is one amendment thanks to which those who wish to do so who are over 40 and still have not done their military service, those persons can pay a fee and then receive not an exoneration of their duty to serve but if they pay that fee, they do not do the military service. They are not buying it per se as somebody in the committee did suggest. Rather what it is, the fee they pay serves as a fee paid by a certain category of persons who wish to do so in order not to have to do the military service. So it is it reflects the desire of these people not to do the military service and these people are not on the territory, they live outside of the Syrian Arab Republic. The question was does it concern those who are outside of the country. The answer is yes. Also legislative decree number 18 was amended. That is on the length of military service. Currently we are looking at matters we are revisiting laws governing military service in Syria. We have adopted a new vision, a new perspective of military service. We are now considering voluntary military service and distinguish between the two, a professional army and a voluntary service army. We are potentially revisiting the concept of comprehensive military service and also because of the circumstances, namely war, we had to extend the length of military service. This being said, as I was saying before, we are considering the possibility of shortening the length of compulsory military service. Now, amnesty laws, the question was do they also affect military service? I think there is a misunderstanding there and that is because of the sources that have communicated that information to you, these open sources you get your information from. I believe you have been given erroneous information with regards to the implementation of that law and its consequences. Let me talk about two things in that connection and also in connection with cyber crime. First of all, let me talk about compulsory military service. Stay on that subject. All amnesty decrees also mention deserters be they deserters within the territory or abroad. I believe that decree No. 7 is one you mention also. Decree No. 7 is relevant here. So decree No. 7, perhaps my colleague will correct me if I am wrong, it is the 2022 decree No. 7 which is relevant here. He might be wrong but that decree also covers the issue of deserters who have been prosecuted because of their desertion. This decree No. 7 of 2022 covers many categories of people who might be entitled to amnesty but those who communicated that information to you forgot to tell you that for the amnesty decree to be applicable for deserters who are still in the country or abroad, the deserter needs to go to the Ministry of Defense for, to benefit, to enjoy the protection of that decree. Those who are abroad who have not contacted the ministry to be entitled to the protection of that decree cannot be covered by that decree because as I was saying they need to go to the military enrollment units who are in charge of military service to enjoy the protection of decree No. 7. That was on military service. May I now move on to the enlisting or enrollment of children. A number of you asked about that. There has been an amalgamation here. I believe on an equal footing have been placed the regular, our government army and the armed groups in a previous answer I said that I would later speak about enrollment. Now, back to the law of military service which I was referring to earlier on. That law defines the age for military service, namely 18. Anyone over 18, that law protects also children. So it must be full 18, not just in the 18th year but that means it must be 18 already. We have law No. 21 of 2021 that applies there. It explicitly prohibits the enlisting of children. Children who have been enlisted are treated as victims in the light of the law. We also have a law on minor offenders that is relevant. We shortly will be adopting a law on restorative justice for minors which embodies the additional protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, OPAC. Under that law anything to do with justice for minors, juvenile justice, and their prosecution will be covered. We also have a national plan for the the treatment of enlisted children. Recently, around a month ago, a group, an armed group that is a terrorist armed group that is in the south of Syria was detained and they admitted that they had enlisted a number of children and we managed to locate those children, retrieve them, and the government treated those enlisted children as victims and subsequently prosecuted those responsible for enlisting those children pursuant to law 11 of 2013 which criminalizes the enlisting of minors ' children. Investigations revealed how these children were exploited and were used in combat operations. Unfortunately, they were the subject, the victims of sexual violence in the process. These children currently are in the process of being rehabilitated. This is a concrete example which is, as I was saying before, just a month old as to how enlisted children are dealt with or cared for. Madam, one member of the Committee had asked a question, Madam, I think, on the registration of births, birth registration. You are right. The personal status law has been amended several times. The last amendment was through regulation 13 which replaces law number 26 of 2007 to regulate birth registration. This being said, the circumstances we have gone through led us to have to intervene legally to ensure that all births be registered. A number of measures were taken. There is law 13 of 2021 which is relevant. It is on the birth registration which was subsequently amended to cover the registration of children born out of wedlock. We also refer to law 2 of 2023 on persons whose families are not known in order to protect that category of children whose parents are not known. Among the most important points of law 13 on personal status, Syria has a single administration for this single civil registry office. Previously, people had to be registered where they lived. Now, with the new amendments to the relevant laws, any child can be registered anywhere nationwide. Syria, as I was saying, has a unified civil registry service. For those outside of the country, including people in refugee camps as well, we have facilitated birth registration for Syrian mothers and fathers outside of the country. We have done this in order to ensure a comprehensive birth registration for citizens and avoid cases of statelessness. I hope I have answered your questions sufficiently. Thank you very much. Thank you, Dr. Yasser. I would like to now answer the question relating to the election process, but allow me to start by passing the floor to Mr. Nizar Saktani from the Ministry of Justice, please. We would like to reiterate that some sources used were not objective ones. Those sources were attempting to undermine the efforts made by the Syrian Arab Republic in the context of constitutional exchanges in our national report from Paragraph 100/110. We said that the electoral laws of 2014 and the constitutional law of 2012 determined clearly the electoral process, the process for candidacy, presentation and elections which allows voters to choose their representatives freely and provides for the allocation of candidates. I will be brief. The electoral process is overseen by the judiciary and this is done through the Supreme Electoral Commission pursuant to law 5. This commission comprises five judges who are independent and they are selected for a four-year mandate period. In addition, there are seven reserve judges. If one core member abstains, he or she will be replaced by another judge for reasons of health or because they have resigned, for example. On that account, can there be records to a judge outside of that commission? That commission has a four-year mandate as I say and it is overseen by the constitutional court, the high court. The law also guarantees that the media may freely support and cover the electoral process from the outset to the conclusion and the publication of the results. Penalties are enshrined to dissuade anybody undermining the integrity of this process and the constitutional court has oversight of the selection of the President of the Republic as well and of the government powers as well as the selection of the Chair of the People's Assembly in order to ensure proper oversight by a constitutionally appointed authority and independent judiciary. During the 2014 Presidential Elections, some parliamentarians from the Arab and foreign countries were able to oversee this process. The same process was repeated in 2021. Members of the high electoral commission, there is seven of them and the seven judges that sit on that are independent. There is also a number of independent commissions across the different provinces and this all is stipulated by the electoral regulations. One of the committee members put a question relating to the 2018 local elections where 100 or 1,000 rather than 84 women were elected. Allow me to say that in 2022 in the local elections and following the steps taken by a country to strengthen women's participation, there were 2,137 women. So that is a double, basically double the number vis-a-vis 2018. That is a 12% representation rate, 12% of elected representatives are women. The members of the electoral commission make up part of the judiciary and they are responsible for sitting in the high electoral council as well. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Nisa. To answer the question that was raised concerning peaceful assembly and the law insuring peaceful assembly, I would like to pass the floor to Mr. Yezar Kazle, please. Thank you very much. The right to peaceful assembly is a right that is enshrined in the constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in the new 2012 constitution. This was laid out in particular in Article 44 and according to that citizens are entitled to assemble, to peacefully demonstrate, to strike and to do all of this with constitutional protection. We also have a law that regulates peaceful assembly. This is law 54, dating back to 2011. This also regulates requests for authorization to peacefully assemble regardless of the form thereof, demonstration, strike or another kind of artistic, cultural or other gathering. Steps have been planned. I think Mr. Leiber asked about the steps that we were planning to implement in this area. So we have gradually sought to define the way demonstrations are managed if they are in contravention of authorizations or the stipulated condition of authorization. The relevant authorities and here we are talking about two different bodies, the local government where the assembly is happening and in addition the local law enforcement forces. They are not armed. They are equipped with instruments to disperse demonstrations. So this law allows individuals, private individuals the authorization to assemble peacefully. This is also a right that is accorded to non-governmental organizations. On an annual basis there are a number of authorizations that are issued by the overseeing body. I do not have the figures precisely at my fingertips here, but between 2015 and 2018 on an annual basis we have had at least between 80 and 100 requests for demonstrations. In recent years that has dropped somewhat. We have not received a huge number of requests for demonstrations recently. The example that was cited by the Committee member would seem to relate to erroneous information. What happened in the place in question was not, in fact, a demonstration. This was a group of individuals who gave themselves over to acts of sabotage against the authorities. This was not a peaceful demonstration. It was a group of young people who took it upon themselves to target the authorities, the local government, the police station and the police headquarters. But there was a rapid response characterized by a lot of discipline and we contacted the senior community leaders in that region who intervened peacefully to deal with it in a harmonious fashion. And there was no fatality as a result. I am surprised that you have received the information you have and I wonder what the source is of the information suggesting that there were any fatalities. Things in fact were resolved peacefully because in that region there are community leaders that we often work with to resolve the situation. Thank you very much to the Delegation for the answers provided. We will now hear some follow-up questions to be put by the Committee members. First of all, Mr. Gomez, please, you have the floor. Thank you very much, Chairperson and thank you as well for all of the information provided by the Delegation members. I want to put three follow-up questions. They are very specific and if you do not have time to answer you can maybe do so in writing within the time frame given by the Chair at the end of this meeting. The first relates to the composition of the High Council of the judiciary. We have heard from Mr. Nassar that this is presided over by the President of the Republic and it comprises seven members. So the President and six others experienced judges but I would like to know if you could also tell me who designates the other six members of this council. Are they designated by the President or other judges? You have also given us data concerning the number of cases that have come before field military tribunals. Now, we said beforehand that we were pleased to greet the abolition of these field tribunals in 2023 but you offered us some figures and it would be good to know how many cases have been transferred with the abolition of those courts to other tribunals. Maybe you could provide that in writing in the time frame allowed. Now, could you also tell us clearly which law regulates the procedure before the Antiterrorist Court and which law regulates the process before the current military tribunals, not the field tribunals. We know they have been abolished but the current military tribunals, exactly which law, what is its name because I am rather struggling to identify the laws governing these. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Gomez, for that. We will now turn to Mr. Alhaiba, please. And I would like to thank members of the Delegation for their replies. With regard to our sources, of course, there is the report of the State Party but there are also replies for the list of issues. But all Treaty bodies, even in the periodic review, we also use other reports and other documents, sources that are open to the public but some sources that are not open in order to strike a balance and assist the situation. I would like to pose two questions in this respect. For the Committee mandated to provide authorization for peaceful Assemblies, as Dr. Yasser said, the composition or membership of this Committee, of course, it is under the Ministry of Interior but under which supervision or oversight? Does it have competencies that are not under the control of any judicial oversight when it comes to issuing authorizations or preventing or denying authorizations? The other question, that is also part of my first intervention, of course, you could provide a written reply within the framework how many cases that were referred to the judiciary in case of denial by the Committee to offer an authorization or the other way around. Of course, some regular cases, I mean, of course, the authorization is not a liberal approach. It is different. But what are the cases that were referred to the judiciary? Have there been cases referred to the judiciary? We want to know the role of the judiciary in this case. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Alhoba. We will now turn to the next speaker. Thank you very much. Thank you to the Delegation for the answers they have given us and in particular thank you to Madame for what she said regarding the repatriation of children in camps in the northeast of Syria and I hope the European countries will hear the call that you put out to them. I just have a fairly technical or institutional question concerning the national commission on children's rights mentioned in paragraph 72 of the list of issues. You can answer in writing but I wonder whether or not you could provide information concerning the practical activities that this national children's rights commission that was set up in 2021 according to your report actually involves what their practical activities are and what its mandate is. Thank you. The Chair, thank you very much Madame Tegruja for that statement. We will now hear from the next speaker. Mr. Toraja, please. Thank you, Madame Chairperson and thank you for the information from the Delegation. I would like to make a follow-up question on issue 27 on election. Of course, it is very difficult for the Committee to judge the information is right or not but you have said that the people have engaged in the election very freely but I am asking one question which has not responded is that why the sharp drop of the turnaround in the 2020 election, it would suggest that some people could be fear and something and they cast a doubt of fair election and the voter treatment data is from your report, that is the report Paragraph 106. So that would be some kind of circumstantial or indirect evidence I have to rely on. And also as for the election oversight, your report explains very in detail and eloquent but I am not very much sure about the it depends on the dependence of the as Mr. Carlos Gomez mentioned independence of the court and also the other question I raised but no answer is freedom of expression. If I am not wrong, there is no specific answers or the questions. In this relation, I would just like to correct my previous statement about the new law to establish a media ministry. I have said that my question was new law to establish a new ministry of information was in that drafting process, journalists is not engaging. By this question, I would like to focus on the transparency as well as the election process because it is very important that the to make all the relevant persons engaged in the public life. That is all. Thank you. Thank you in advance. Thank you very much, Mr. Teraiya and also thank you to those colleagues who put other follow-up questions, Mr. Head of Delegation. I think you have eight minutes remaining. Obviously, the Delegation can also submit its answers in writing to follow-up questions and also please share your closing statement. Thank you. Do I understand that we have eight minutes for answers and the final remarks? Eight minutes for both. We are going to make the final statement and if we still have time, we are going to answer briefly some of the follow-up questions but we are also going to provide you with written replies if this is suitable. Should we go ahead this way? Yes. Okay. We will start with Dr. Yasser is going to answer some of the questions. Very precise answers. I do not want to leave some questions open if there are some concerns. I start with Mr. Haiba. When it comes to organization of demonstrations, as you said, the application is submitted to the Government and then the Committee of Demonstrations under the Ministry of Interior presided over by an officer who is also supported by someone responsible for order in the province and the third person but I forgot his responsibility or her responsibility. So it is a technical Committee that determines the possibility of authorizing the demonstration or the assembly in a certain place. Of course, the law stipulates that the Committee on demonstrations or if the application is denied, then the decision can be appealed at the administrative judiciary court within a week. So a week is given to accept the appeal or reject it. So there is an oversight at the administrative judiciary just to verify that the application was correct or not. With regard to the question on the rights of the child, Madam, I am lucky to be a member of this Committee. I represent the Minister of Interior at the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The National Committee after the adoption of the law on the rights of the child made many introduced many functions. There is a plan to protect children in Syria including all the chapters within the law on the rights of the child. A number of guidelines regarding parental care, early childhood and others and there is also an early child strategy or early childhood strategy that was developed. We are going to give you details in a written format. The time is short. That is why I cannot provide more details. I think there is some confusion between three different laws or acts. The first law is the law 18 on the media and also the law establishing the Ministry of Media or Information does not organize the performance of media activities, but also the law on information crimes. It is totally independent and it probes into liberty of personal life. We are going to provide you details in writing. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Yasser. I give the floor now to the Ministry of Justice, Mr. Nazar Saddikny, to answer the issue of the Supreme Judicial Council. Members of the council are seven members by virtue of law. Veteran judges, I would say, presided by the president of the court of cassation, they are selected amongst the chair of the court of cassation of Aleppo or Damascus. So the oldest two judges in the country. So the chair of the court of cassation is one of those two courts and he is a veteran. So they have served for more than or served for more than 30 years. So and also the two vice presidents of the court of cassation are selected based on their experience and ranks as well. And there is also the chair of the judicial inspection and the prosecutor general is the oldest judge in the general prosecution. So this membership, this is the membership of the Supreme Judicial Council, all of whom are of high ranks in the judiciary. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Nazar. If you allow me, with your permission, I am going to make my final statement. First I would like to thank you, Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee. I thank you for this opportunity to establish a dialogue with the Delegation of Syria on the provisions of the covenant. I would like also to thank ladies and gentlemen, the interpreters and also members of the Secretariat for their efforts over the past two days. I deeply thank my Delegation for engaging in to a constructive dialogue with the Committee. Over the past two days we have seen a constructive dialogue aimed at elevating civil and political rights and we are going to continue to implement those rights. My country will continue to work with human rights mechanisms that pay heed to the principles of neutrality, objectivity and non-selectivity and in accordance with the mandate of these mechanisms and their establishing framework and we will continue to provide our periodic reports within the framework of our circumstances as part of the conventions that we are party to and in line with the final conclusions at the national level. Members of the Committee over the past two days we have endeavored to provide replies to all the questions made despite the fact that some of these questions relied on unknown sources and false allegations based on false and unfounded reports propagated by well-known sources for political ends to derogate the efforts of the Syrian Arab Republic to preserve its stability and security over its territories and to derogate its sovereign right in implementing its national legislation protecting its nationals and achieving justice for them all as well as securing their humanitarian needs amidst significant challenges caused by years of fighting terrorism and UCMs that violate all the rights of Syrian citizens. We hope of the members of the Committee and all UN mechanisms not to adopt every piece of information or reports they receive and take them for granted in order to maintain the spirit of constructive and targeted dialogue and to achieve the aim of reporting which is to help states parties to optimally implement the provisions of the covenant in closing ending the suffering of the Syrian people and improving the humanitarian situation as well as the human rights situation in the country requires in the first place ending UCMs, unilateral coercive measures that violate the basic rights of the Syrian people including the right to life and have not heard any comment on this issue and the rehabilitation of the infrastructure devastated by armed terrorist groups ending occupation and illegal presence on the parts of our territory because this undermines the rule of law in these areas and to stop support to armed groups and plundering our natural resources. We reiterate that implementing the rights of our people in the occupied land requires ending the occupation immediately in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Committee eliminating these elements will undoubtedly facilitate the creation of an environment conducive to the elevation of human rights and upholding them in accordance with the covenant and to continue to develop institutional and legislative frameworks to bridge gaps and to implement our international obligations at the national level. I would like to thank you once again Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee. I would like to thank the Delegation from the Syrian Arab Republic in the person of Ambassador Haider Ali Ahmad for having come here for your diligence in asking and answering our questions. Also I would like to pay tribute to the presence of the members of civil society, those in the academic world and those who have followed us online in the last two days. This process was a process of dialogue during which we tackled the number of issues pertaining to the rights enshrined in the ICCPR which is our constitutional and legal framework within which the covenant is applied, fighting against impunity, accountability, striving for human rights, anti-corruption measures, state of emergency, combating terrorism, non-discrimination, general equality, violence against women including domestic violence, right to life and protection of civilian populations in forced disappearances, the right to privacy and freedom of movement, internally displaced persons, prohibition of torture and other cruel and derailing treatment or punishment, freedom and security and deprivation of liberty, elimination of slavery and people trafficking, how aliens are treated and refugees and stateless persons and asylum seekers are concerned, the right to a fair trial, the right to freedom, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, rights of the child, rights to be involved in public affairs, et cetera, all of these points have been covered. On this point I would like to remind the Delegation that you have the possibility of sending additional information to the Secretariat within the next 48 hours in a brief memorandum as per Article 68 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee, thanks to which this will enable the members of the Committee to make a comprehensive evaluation which will be reflected in the concluding observation. I would like to underscore that the statements made during this dialogue attest to the commitment we have as to the enforcement of the our mandate which is to high standards of civil and political rights in the Syrian Republic as we reported originally and I can assure the Delegation of this, the documents we have considered are online and the questions that were put by colleagues are designed precisely to clarify any misunderstanding we might have and the only way in which to clarify these doubts is to put questions to you during such a dialogue. Before I conclude I would like to thank all those persons who have been involved in the putting together of this dialogue both here as well as in Damascus and in particular the Secretariat team, Gabrielle Hapton, the Secretary, the interpreters, the technicians, we thank the interpreters for these couple of minutes they have granted us and also our dear friends of the Committee for the commitments throughout the dialogue. May I wish everyone a good rest of the day. Therefore, I can now close meeting 4132 of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights. Have a good evening, good weekend.