



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

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

Summary record of the 961st meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 18 January 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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

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

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Israel took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Yaar** (Israel) said that his country warmly welcomed the Committee's commitment, expertise and advice and looked forward to a fruitful dialogue and to a fair and candid assessment of Israel's report; he hoped the Committee would take into consideration the unique challenges faced by his country. Since its inception, Israel had been a melting pot of cultures, open to Jewish immigrants and home to a strong Arab population; its policy was to ensure the integration of all peoples. Yet it had faced significant security threats ever since its founding and was still suffering from indiscriminate attacks from the Gaza Strip and incalculable threats from other parts of the region. For example, the people of southern Israel had been the target of over 12,000 Qassam rocket, mortar and missile attacks over the preceding eight years. Meanwhile, the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, abducted in 2006 by Hamas, remained in captivity without any access to the International Committee of the Red Cross.
3. The State of Israel was committed to promoting women's equal rights in law and practice and had taken great strides towards achieving full equality. Rulings handed down by the Supreme Court and directives from the Attorney General had established that appropriate representation must mean equal representation. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women monitored the implementation of that principle in the Israeli political process. In addition, the Equal Rights for Women Act of 1951 had been amended pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in order to ensure the inclusion of women in bodies shaping national policy in all areas. Israeli women had held such high-ranking positions as those of prime minister, foreign minister, justice of the Supreme Court and speaker of the House. Extensive legislation on gender mainstreaming, the equal distribution of domestic duties, personal status, equal employment opportunities and domestic violence had been adopted, and various initiatives aimed at making equality a reality for all women on the ground were being pursued. Although the situation of women's rights in Israel was not perfect, appropriate judicial and administrative mechanisms were in place to redress any inadequacies.
4. **Ms. Matias** (Israel) said that her Government wished to congratulate the Committee on the two general recommendations that it had adopted at the forty-seventh session and heartily supported the adoption of a general recommendation on the economic consequences of family relations and their dissolution, an effort which was being led by Ms. Halperin-Kadari, the expert from Israel.
5. Equality was enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, and the Equal Rights for Women Act of 1951 had been enacted only three years after the founding of the State. Those issues had always been a priority, and the Government was assisted in its efforts to promote women's rights by a myriad of other forces, including members of the Knesset, civil society and the academic community. NGOs were active in initiating legislation and promoting women's rights, and the court system and the media also played a role. Israel's commitment to the Convention was an important facet of that work, and the preparation of its reports had been the occasion for intensive deliberations on the relevant issues. The Government had studied the Committee's concluding comments on its third

periodic report and, while it was proud of the progress that had been made, it had concluded that more needed to be done.

6. The situation in the Middle East was complex, however, and fraught with danger from terrorism, extremism and violence. The last time a delegation had come before the Committee, Israel had been implementing a plan of disengagement from Gaza, with the hope of seeing the Palestinians have complete control over their lives, without any Israeli presence. The Government had also looked forward to resuming peace negotiations. Although such negotiations were currently on hold, Israel hoped to revive the peace process as soon as possible. In the interim, Gaza had come under the control of Hamas, and Palestinians in that region appeared to have adopted more repressive practices with respect to women. In the West Bank, however, the Palestinian Authority, with the aid of the international community, seemed to be striving for modernization, transparency and rights for the population. Both Palestinian and Israeli women shared the right to peaceful and secure lives. The rockets launched from Gaza into Israeli schools and kindergartens, threats of Palestinian terrorist attacks against civilians and the roadblocks, checkpoints and other security measures carried out by Israel in the Palestinian territories caused suffering on both sides. Negotiations must be carried out, with significant participation by women in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), so that the two States could live side by side in peace and security.

7. The delegation would make every effort to respond to the Committee's questions; it cautioned, however, that information regarding the status of women in Gaza and the West Bank was available to the Palestinians controlling those areas rather than to Israel. The delegation's focus would therefore be on the status of women in Israel, where women were a vibrant, vocal and integral part of society and had participated in government since the founding of the country. Indeed, women shaped and participated in Israeli society to the same extent as did men.

8. Although much remained to be done to ensure full equality and rights, particularly within the more vulnerable segments of Israeli society, since the submission of the previous report, all branches of government had made a concerted effort to advance the cause of equality between men and women in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, as well as among people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. The Basic Laws enacted soon after the establishment of Israel provided a constitutional basis for the protection of each person's fundamental rights. Examples of more recent laws, which must be considered as a whole in order to fully assess their impact on Israeli society, included the Public Protection from Sex Offenders Acts, a 2007 law which required the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women to submit an opinion regarding the gender implications of bills and proposed regulations, and a 2008 law aimed at encouraging the advancement and integration of women in the workforce and the adjustment of workplaces to women's needs. Legislation now required statistical data to be disaggregated by gender, unless circumstances justified an exception. The Women's Employment Act had been amended to lengthen maternity leave and protect the mother's rights in the workplace. National plans to combat trafficking for prostitution and to combat slavery and trafficking for purposes of slavery and forced labour had also been established.

9. The courts, and in particular the Supreme Court, continued to protect such basic rights as the right to full equality. Any person who felt that his or her rights had been infringed could petition the Supreme Court for redress; approximately 2,300 petitions were lodged yearly. The lower courts were also active in promoting women's rights in such areas as personal status, employment and health. The recent conviction of former President Moshe Katzav for sex offences also demonstrated the commitment of law enforcement authorities and the judiciary to promoting and protecting human rights, in particular

women's. In 2006, the Court had upheld the validity of a same-sex marriage certificate issued by a foreign State.

10. The executive branch was facilitating the reintegration of mothers into the workforce and increasing the budget of the day-care division of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour in order to provide meals and day care for young children of working mothers. It had decreed that equal gender representation must be achieved on the boards of Government corporations within two years. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women had drawn up a list of over 1,500 women, including Arab women, who were qualified to serve as directors of Government corporations.

11. Progress had been made in securing the placement of women in high-ranking positions in all three branches of government. Women in the civil service outnumbered men and were a strong presence in top-ranking positions. The budget for the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women had been doubled and included a special allocation for minority populations, and two new posts for issues relating to Arab, Bedouin, Druze and Circassian women had been created. The advancement of Arab women was a priority for the Government of Israel, and in recent years more Arab girls and women had been attending academic and vocational institutions.

12. **Mr. Bruun** said that he would like to commend the State party for its comprehensive report and detailed replies to the list of issues and questions. He reminded the delegation that articles 1 and 2 of the Convention applied to all territories over which a State party exercised control, which, in the case of Israel, included the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Those articles also applied to both citizens and non-citizens, including refugees and stateless persons, and did not cease to apply in periods of conflict or during natural disasters. The replies of Israel did not clarify whether or not the State party accepted those articles as a starting point for discussion. He would also like to know what the status of the Convention was within the Israeli legal system and whether the Government planned to incorporate it into national legislation. Was the Convention invoked in the courts? The Committee was not aware of any jurisprudence that referred to it.

13. **Ms. Gabr** said that, although the delegation had cited dramatic improvements in the situation of the rights of women, it did not seem that a great deal had changed, since the Convention was still not being applied in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee shared the view of other United Nations human rights treaty bodies that Israel had a duty to fulfil its treaty obligations with respect to all persons under its jurisdiction. The impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was surely not the same on both sides. She would like to know how Israel viewed its responsibility to protect the human rights of women affected by the war and to learn what legal remedies existed for those whose homes had been demolished.

14. **Ms. Šimonović** commended the State party on the progress made since its dialogue with the Committee in 2005 and said that her first question was whether Israel intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention. She also asked what obstacles had prevented Israel from introducing a comprehensive prohibition of discrimination against women, as defined in article 1 of the Convention, and incorporating the principle of equality between men and women into the Constitution and other legislation, as called for in paragraphs 18 and 20 of the Committee's 2005 concluding comments.

15. In those observations, the Committee had also encouraged Israel to consider withdrawing its reservations to articles 7 (b) and 16 of the Convention. She asked why no progress had been made in that regard. The reservation to article 16 was preventing the implementation of article 2, which was a core provision of the Convention. The reservation to article 7 (b) concerned the fact that, in Israel, women were not permitted to serve as

judges in rabbinical courts, which were governed solely by religious law. The Committee also noted that women were discriminated against in the area of marriage and divorce.

16. **Ms. Jahan** said that the Committee sought further clarification on the application of the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The delegation had stated that Israel was giving priority to the advancement of women in the Arab population. It would be interesting to learn what safeguards had been introduced and what affirmative action measures had been taken in Israel itself in that regard, in particular in the areas of education, employment, health care and, more importantly, land ownership and housing and residence rights. More specific information on how civil society and NGOs had been involved in producing the report of the State party would also be appreciated. She wondered whether any mechanisms were in place to ensure that the family matters courts and religious courts referred to in the fifth periodic report took the Convention into account.

17. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** said that, as stressed by Mr. Bruun, the Convention also covered the Occupied Palestinian Territory, even in the event of a state of emergency. She assumed that international law had precedence over national law in Israel. As the State party had ratified the Convention in 1991, it had had sufficient time to implement it, especially for a country with its resources, and to bring its legislation into line with international law.

18. She would like information on how many Palestinian women were detained in Israeli prisons, how long they had been incarcerated and what sentences they had received. Was there any possibility that those women, who had fought to recover their national territory, would be freed? After briefly reviewing the circumstances of the creation of the State of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinian people of their national sovereignty, she urged the State party to implement the will of the international community as expressed in United Nations Security Council resolution 242 (1967) so as to open the way to lasting peace in the region.

19. **Ms. Hayashi** said that she had a number of questions concerning national machinery. The fifth periodic report referred to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission and to the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women; how did the two bodies differ? According to paragraph 63 of the report, the Commission handled complaints and filed petitions for injunctions. Were the Commission's activities limited to those involving implementation, or did it also intervene in other areas of gender discrimination? It would be useful to learn how the Commission handled complaints from victims of gender discrimination and whether it provided legal guidance. The same paragraph also stated that the Commission intervened by permission of the court in legal proceedings. Could it submit legal documents on behalf of a party, and had there been any cases in which the Commission's involvement had had an impact?

20. It would be useful to learn whether any body monitored existing legislation, whether it was possible for women to challenge discriminatory laws in court and whether civil society had a role to play in that regard. The lack of legislation defining direct and indirect discrimination posed problems for women who wished to challenge discrimination in law and practice.

21. Had any State bodies collaborated with civil society on issues of relevance to the Convention, such as withdrawal of the State party's reservations or the ratification of the Optional Protocol? It would also be helpful to know which State body was responsible for implementing the Committee's concluding comments and recommendations and whether the parliament would be involved in that task.

22. **Ms. Neubauer** noted that the mandate of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women had been expanded, that two posts had been created to promote the advancement of women belonging to minority populations and that the budget of the

Authority would be doubled in 2011 compared to 2010. She asked about the size of the Authority's permanent staff, since that information was important for an understanding of the Authority's many functions. What percentage of the Authority's budget had been earmarked for operational costs, and what percentage had actually been allocated for specific actions and projects designed to promote the full implementation of the State party's obligations under the Convention? It would be useful to obtain information on the role of the Authority in gender mainstreaming. Was there a national coordinating body responsible for ensuring that the gender perspective was taken duly into account in policymaking in all areas covered by the Convention? While she understood that advisers on the status of women were to be appointed at municipal level, it was clear from the delegation's replies that not all city councils had done so. Did the regulations concerning those appointments set a time frame? What action was the Government taking to ensure that the regulations were implemented?

23. She was pleased to learn from the delegation about the March 2010 resolution under which Government corporations were required to appoint advisers on the status of women. She sought clarification on the time frame for their appointment and its enforcement. She also asked what role the Authority played with regard to those advisers and how they cooperated to ensure that national policy decisions were implemented on the ground.

24. **Ms. Popescu** commended the State party on the progress made in a number of areas, but stressed that, as pointed out by other members of the Committee, Israel also had jurisdiction over the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Thus, the status of Palestinian women in the Occupied Territory needed to be taken duly into consideration by the Government of Israel.

25. She asked whether the Authority had decision-making power within the Government or whether it was a purely consultative body. Could the Authority help introduce bills aimed at promoting equality of women? The delegation had emphasized the role of civil society in proposing legislation and promoting women's rights. Did the Authority and civil society organize joint projects? The Committee sought clarification on reports that a parliamentary inquiry had recently been opened concerning civil society organizations which were said to be active in the area of women's rights. In paragraph 22 of its 2005 concluding comments, the Committee had encouraged the State party to continue its efforts towards conflict resolution and to fully involve all women concerned in all stages of the peace process. According to information available to the Committee, Israel had undertaken to ensure that 25 per cent of employees in all Government bodies involved in peace negotiations were women. She asked whether the Authority had made a contribution in that regard and whether the commitment had been implemented in full.

26. It would be useful to learn about the priorities of action plans for women belonging to minorities, including Arab, Bedouin and other population groups. Reference had been made to a separate budget for minority populations in general. What percentage of the budget was allocated for women in each minority group?

27. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would like to know whether discussions had taken place with the Palestinian authorities on the implementation of humanitarian law and how Israel saw its obligations in that regard. She also enquired whether the establishment of an independent human rights body in accordance with the Paris Principles was under consideration. It would also be useful to learn whether, in the discussions on the framing of a new Constitution, attention had been given to the impact of religion on Israeli society and, in particular, on women's rights.

28. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation of Israel to respond to the Committee's questions concerning articles 1 to 3 of the Convention.

29. **Ms. Rubinstein** (Israel) said that the Convention was implemented throughout the State of Israel. She referred at length to the information supplied by the State party in its reply to question 2 of the list of issues (CEDAW/C/ISR/Q/5/Add.1) and explained that the rights set out in the Convention could not be applied by Israel in the Gaza Strip since the Government of Israel had no effective control in that area, which was controlled, regulated and legislated by Hamas. The Government of Israel also had very limited authority in the Palestinian part of the West Bank, which was controlled, regulated and legislated by the Palestinian Authority.

30. **Ms. Ben-Ami** (Israel), responding to the question on women in the peace process, said that, following the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the Government had amended the Equal Rights for Women Act, as detailed in paragraph 30 of the fifth periodic report. The importance of the resolution had been recognized in several domestic and international forums, including a high-level meeting of Knesset committees in November 2010 at which implementation of the resolution had been discussed. Through its international cooperation agency, the Government organized programmes on women's leadership and capacity-building for women's NGOs. In addition, in December 2010, the Knesset had voted, in a preliminary reading, to pass a bill requiring that at least one third of the members of all future Government investigative and fact-finding commissions should be women.

31. **Mr. Keidar** (Israel), replying to a question about the demolition of housing, said that the military enforced the planning and building laws which had been in place in the West Bank prior to 1967 in order to comply with Israel's obligations under international law to respect the law in place, unless absolutely prevented from doing so, and to safeguard public order in the area. The demolition of illegally constructed buildings was carried out as part of efforts to enforce the planning and building laws. All demolitions were conducted in accordance with the guarantees of due process, such as the right to a fair trial, and residents had every opportunity to legalize an illegal building by filing for a building permit or by proposing a planning amendment. The process was also subject to judicial review before the Israeli Supreme Court. In addition, since September 2000, the Israeli security forces had been required to find effective and lawful means of minimizing the occurrence of terrorist attacks, especially suicide attacks, by Palestinian terrorist groups. One such measure had been the demolition of structures that posed a real security risk to Israeli forces. Palestinian terrorists often operated from within overcrowded civilian neighbourhoods. Military necessity therefore dictated the demolition of structures in those locations, which were legitimate targets for such action under international law on armed conflict. Palestinians and human rights organizations had brought numerous petitions before Israel's Supreme Court in that regard. Wherever possible, even in the midst of military operations, Israeli security forces went to great lengths to minimize the effects of security measures on the civilian population that was not involved in terrorist activities and to ensure that only structures that posed such a security risk were affected.

32. **Ms. Kugler-Ramot** (Israel) said that, given the risk posed by persons incarcerated for security-related offences, they had to be separated from other prisoners and specific limitations placed on privileges and conjugal and other visits. Many such prisoners were members of terrorist groups and continued to attempt to contact their organizations from within prison. Despite the limitations imposed, such inmates were held under appropriate conditions. All prisons employed doctors, dentists and other specialists such as psychiatrists and gynaecologists. Detainees could maintain contact with family members through letters and visits, and they could be sent video cassettes and photographs in some cases. Prison conditions and detainees' access to legal counsel were monitored by the International Committee of the Red Cross, diplomatic representatives and official visitors. Any complaints about prison conditions were immediately brought before the authorities. All detainees were allowed to practise their religion, within the limitations of prison security,

and could celebrate religious holidays and hold group prayers and sermons. Persons incarcerated for security-related offences could receive visits from authorized clergy on approval by the prison warden.

33. Equality was a fundamental principle of the Israeli legal system, as detailed in the periodic reports. Many domestic laws emphasized equality, including gender equality and the prohibition of gender discrimination. International instruments Israel ratified were not directly applicable under Israeli law; their provisions were instead translated into domestic legislation. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was implemented through a large body of domestic legislation, such as basic laws, orders and regulations, municipal by-laws and court rulings. Israeli courts were obliged to interpret domestic legislation in accordance with international law and the country's obligations in that sphere, which added another mechanism to enhance adherence to the Convention.

34. The reservations Israel had made to the Convention were related to the very fabric of Israeli society, which was composed of many religions, each with varying degrees of autonomy with regard to religious practices. The authorities reviewed the reservations on a periodic basis with the active involvement of civil society. The possibility of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention was also examined periodically, but Israel was not currently planning to take that step.

35. Currently, all concluding observations received from human rights treaty bodies were examined and circulated to the relevant ministries and high-ranking officials. However, since several of the treaty bodies had recently expressed concern over the same issues, the Ministry of Justice was considering the possibility of forming a joint inter-ministerial team to review and implement those observations.

36. Prior to drafting a report for a treaty body, the Government wrote to leading NGOs and invited them to submit comments. The Ministry of Justice also posted a general invitation to submit remarks on its website and attributed great importance to comments, data and information received from civil society. The team in charge of preparing the report also searched NGO websites for relevant information, such as legal actions, opinions and reports. Some 25 NGOs had been consulted in the preparation of the fifth periodic report.

37. Training on many aspects of human rights, including gender equality, was provided by the Institute of Legal Training for Attorneys and Legal Advisers, which organized lectures, seminars and courses to raise awareness among attorneys and legal advisers in the civil service and the Ministry of Justice, especially on the treatment of victims of trafficking in persons, sexual offences and family violence. The Institute of Advanced Judicial Studies also held some 50 seminars each year for judges. In 2010, they had included seminars on sex crimes, justice and equality, and international law, and a special seminar had been held for judges working in family courts.

38. Overall, religious courts, including the rabbinical courts, had exclusive jurisdiction over all matters of marriage and divorce, as explained in paragraphs 618 and 619 of the fifth periodic report. The Supreme Court heard all appeals or petitions concerning infringements of rights or any other issue by all persons seeking redress.

39. **Ms. Matias** (Israel) said that Israel took the application of international humanitarian law extremely seriously within its borders and the territories it occupied. There were several joint committees to which Palestinians addressed their grievances; the Israeli authorities did their utmost to resolve all such issues. Israel also held regular discussions on humanitarian issues with the international community.

40. **Mr. Keidar** (Israel) said that Israel scrupulously abided by its obligations under international law. The Hague Regulations were fully applicable with regard to the West

Bank; Israel applied the humanitarian provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and those provisions of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions that reflected customary international law. Those instruments formed the basis of policy decisions and were frequently invoked in litigation and judgements, primarily before the Supreme Court. The basic standards of necessity and proportionality were strictly observed, as were all other standards of international law.

41. **Ms. Younis** (Israel), replying to questions concerning Arab women, said that in the 2009/10 academic year the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women had granted 311 scholarships to female students from the Bedouin, Druze and Circassian populations in an effort to encourage women from those populations to continue their studies. In addition, the Authority ran several courses on leadership and female empowerment in municipalities where women of minority populations lived. All the relevant documentation was distributed in several languages, including Arabic. The 2011–2015 programme for Bedouin women in the south provided for workshops on family matters, intimacy, communication between spouses, dignity, parental authority and first aid to be offered in schools and community centres.

42. A 2010 Government resolution provided that all local authorities must appoint advisers on the status of women. Those advisers received training from the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in areas such as personal skills, gender equality and academic advancement. As of July 2010, a total of 225 of the 255 local authorities had appointed women to those positions.

43. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the State party had any legislation that provided for the implementation of the temporary special measures it had described and whether those measures applied to Arab women. She would appreciate information on the overall number of Arab women in the civil service.

44. **Ms. Awori** said that she welcomed the measures taken by the State party to combat violence against women and asked what their impact had been. She would like to know whether the State party planned to have one comprehensive law covering violence against all women in Israel. Did the 2006 Public Protection from Sex Offenders Act cover the offence of marital rape and were adequate sanctions provided for in that regard? She would welcome information on how the Act was enforced. While the State party had described the assistance it provided to the Bedouin community in paragraph 181 of the fifth periodic report, it would appear from its reply to question 14 of the list of issues that Palestinian women were discriminated against when it came to access to shelters for battered women. She would appreciate clarification on that matter, bearing in mind that it was necessary to provide assistance to all women, without discrimination.

45. **Ms. Gabr** said that she had been concerned to read reports in United Nations documents of women being tortured, including by sleep deprivation for up to three days, while in detention in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She asked how the rights of Palestinian women in detention were respected, what arrangements were made to enable them to see their families, and whether prisons had female investigators. She asked what measures were taken by the State party to fulfil its legal obligation to protect women when they were crossing checkpoints, in view of the reports received of Palestinian women being harassed and intimidated. What measures were taken to protect Palestinian women from physical and verbal violence on the part of settlers? The demolition of Palestinian homes was a violation of the right to housing. She asked for clarification of such demolitions, and why almost no building permits were granted to Arabs.

46. **Ms. Neubauer** said that, while she welcomed the Anti-Trafficking Act of 2006, it would be useful if the State party could provide a clear definition of its understanding of the term “trafficking” in writing, so that the Committee could ensure that it was in line with the

relevant international instruments. In the light of reports of trafficking in women and girls between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she would like to know whether the State party's understanding of — and legislation on — trafficking included such “internal” trafficking in persons, or whether it was limited to cross-border trafficking. She asked what was being done by Israel to protect trafficked Palestinian women and whether it envisaged establishing a joint Israeli-Palestinian network to ensure their protection. In the face of reports of abuse by State agents of women asylum-seekers crossing the Sinai Desert, she asked whether the State party had any kind of policy to address sexual violence against women in that context. She would also appreciate information on preventive and protective measures in place to address the issue of abuse and exploitation of migrant domestic workers.

47. **Ms. Popescu** asked what action the State party was taking or planned to take to eliminate gender stereotyping in the private and public spheres, bearing in mind the link between such stereotypes and violence, including sexual violence. She welcomed the fact that the State party had provided a broader definition of trafficking in persons in its fifth periodic report, as had been recommended by the Committee, but expressed concern that the issue of trafficking was dealt with separately according to whether the intended purpose was prostitution or forced labour. She asked for further information in that regard and, in particular, about enforcement of the Anti-Trafficking Act. What measures were being taken by the State party to prevent trafficking of persons between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory? She asked about the status of the bill on the prohibition of the use of paid sexual services and whether it was a punishable offence to work as a prostitute.

48. **Mr. Mirkin** (Israel) said that in 2008 Israel's 13 shelters for battered women and their children had received 748 women and 1,059 children. There were two shelters for women and their children from the Arab community. One shelter received both Jewish and Arab women, and one shelter was for Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women. It was a difficult decision for battered women in the Bedouin community to enter shelters owing to their social stigmatization in the community; often, those who went to a shelter were accused of going to a house of prostitution and were at risk of having their children taken from them. In 2009 there had been 907 applications for admission to the 13 shelters. Of the women entering the shelters, 59 per cent were Jewish, 32 per cent were Muslim and 5 per cent were Christian. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provided financial grants for women in the shelters to enable them to build a new life when they left. The grant was often used to purchase basic home furnishings, fund studies or practical training, or to pay for medical or social support or for extra-curricular programmes for children. The allocation of grants was determined on the basis of financial need, access to other financial support and number of children. Women considered to be in acute danger were not refused admission to a shelter or similar facility. The 24-hour national hotline for battered women and children served speakers of Hebrew, Arabic, English, Russian and Amharic. In 2010, the hotline had received 235,308 calls for help, 14,000 of which concerned violence against women and 40,157 of which concerned violence in the family.

49. **Ms. Younis** (Israel) described the website of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, the booklet “Women – Institutions and Organizations in Israel” and a booklet listing all the services available to women at local, regional and national levels. She recalled that the survey conducted by the Authority to explore the public's awareness and views of domestic violence and violence against women had shown that 80 per cent of the population believed that it was possible to break the cycle of violence.

50. **Mr. Mirkin** (Israel) said that there were nine centres for victims of sexual violence which provided both practical and emotional support. A telephone support service for victims of sexual violence, operated by volunteers, had received 30,000 calls in 2008 and 40,000 in 2010. There were two crisis support centres specifically for the Arab population,

but all centres received Arab women. There was one centre specifically for the Ultra-Orthodox population. There were six treatment centres for victims of sexual abuse which provided psychosocial treatment as well as medical and legal services. One of the centres was located in the north and served the Arab population. The Bedouin community in the south was served by the regional centre in Be'er-Sheva. Approximately 800 women received treatment annually at those centres. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provided 100 per cent of the treatment centres' funding and financed private treatment for minors who had suffered sexual abuse.

51. **Ms. Kugler-Ramot** (Israel) said that every report of violence was investigated thoroughly by law enforcement agencies and referred, where appropriate, to the relevant State Attorney's Office. Law enforcement duties relating to violent offences committed by residents of the Israeli settlements and land disputes were handled by an inter-ministerial team responsible for dealing with incitement, uprisings and ideological offences. The team included representatives from the State Attorney's Office, the Israeli security agency, the police and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). In general, reluctance on the part of both sides of the conflict to cooperate with the police complicated the investigative process and made it hard to obtain evidence. The police provided Palestinian witnesses with transportation to Israeli courts in order to facilitate the processing of cases against Israelis where necessary. In 2009, there had been 524 police investigations concerning disturbance of the peace. Of those, 256 had been filed by Palestinians and 217 by IDF, the border police or the civil police. Some 131 persons had been indicted that year. As at September 2010, 109 police investigations concerning violence by Israelis directed at members of the Arab population had been transferred to the State Attorney's Office and 38 indictments had been filed.

52. **Mr. Keidar** (Israel) said that IDF ran training programmes for soldiers stationed at security crossings and checkpoints to ensure that they respected basic human rights and human dignity. A designated security crossing unit had been established within the military police force. Its job was to prevent the passage of terrorists from the West Bank into Israel, while maintaining the security and quality of life of both Israelis and Palestinians in the area. The soldiers were taught Arabic and trained to respect the population's humanitarian needs and human dignity. They were also taught about Islam, the Palestinian culture and issues relating to Palestinian women. Lectures and workshops on international law and rules of conduct also featured in the training given to members of IDF. Female soldiers were positioned at various border crossings.

53. All complaints brought before IDF were taken seriously and examined in depth. Any violation of IDF orders and approved practices could lead to disciplinary or criminal charges. A special unit had been set up to investigate cases of misconduct by IDF soldiers involving Palestinian civilians, including alleged harassment at checkpoints.

54. **Ms. Ben-Ami** (Israel) said that, despite the lack of specific legislation on refugees, asylum-seekers in Israel were dealt with effectively and efficiently. The current procedures were fully in line with Israel's obligations under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol thereto. Women and children had separate facilities in the detention centres where asylum-seekers were held while their cases were under consideration. Fathers were allowed to visit their children, and educators and social workers came to the facilities on a regular basis. Female asylum-seekers could request that their interview be conducted by a woman. If it became clear, during the course of the interview, that the asylum-seeker might have suffered from sexual harassment or rape, her case was referred to the NGO Doctors Without Borders. Applications for asylum submitted by an unaccompanied minor, a person suffering from mental problems, or a victim of torture were handled with particular care and with sensitivity to their specific circumstances.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.