

Sixty-fifth session (2005)

General recommendation XXX on discrimination against non-citizens

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,

Recalling the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to the rights and freedoms enshrined therein without distinction of any kind, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,

Recalling the Durban Declaration in which the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, recognized that xenophobia against non-nationals, particularly migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, constitutes one of the main sources of contemporary racism and that human rights violations against members of such groups occur widely in the context of discriminatory, xenophobic and racist practices,

Noting that, based on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and general recommendations XI and XX, it has become evident from the examination of the reports of States parties to the Convention that groups other than migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers are also of concern, including undocumented non-citizens and persons who cannot establish the nationality of the State on whose territory they live, even where such persons have lived all their lives on the same territory,

Having organized a thematic discussion on the issue of discrimination against non-citizens and received the contributions of members of the Committee and States parties, as well as contributions from experts of other United Nations organs and specialized agencies and from non-governmental organizations,

Recognizing the need to clarify the responsibilities of States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination with regard to non-citizens,

Basing its action on the provisions of the Convention, in particular article 5, which requires States parties to prohibit and eliminate discrimination based on race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin in the enjoyment by all persons of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms,

Affirms that:

I. Responsibilities of States parties to the Convention

1. Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Convention defines racial discrimination. Article 1, paragraph 2 provides for the possibility of differentiating between citizens and non-citizens. Article 1, paragraph 3 declares that, concerning nationality, citizenship or naturalization, the legal provisions of States parties must not discriminate against any particular nationality;

2. Article 1, paragraph 2, must be construed so as to avoid undermining the basic prohibition of discrimination; hence, it should not be interpreted to detract in any way from the rights and freedoms recognized and enunciated in particular in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

3. Article 5 of the Convention incorporates the obligation of States parties to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Although some of these rights, such as the right to participate in elections, to vote and to stand for election, may be confined to citizens, human rights are, in principle, to be enjoyed by all persons. States parties are under an obligation to guarantee equality between citizens and non-citizens in the enjoyment of these rights to the extent recognized under international law;

4. Under the Convention, differential treatment based on citizenship or immigration status will constitute discrimination if the criteria for such differentiation, judged in the light of the objectives and purposes of the Convention, are not applied pursuant to a legitimate aim, and are not proportional to the achievement of this aim. Differentiation within the scope of article 1, paragraph 4, of the Convention relating to special measures is not considered discriminatory;

5. States parties are under an obligation to report fully upon legislation on non-citizens and its implementation. Furthermore, States parties should include in their periodic reports, in an appropriate form, socio-economic data on the non-citizen population within their jurisdiction, including data disaggregated by gender and national or ethnic origin;

Recommends,

Based on these general principles, that the States parties to the Convention, as appropriate to their specific circumstances, adopt the following measures:

II. Measures of a general nature

6. Review and revise legislation, as appropriate, in order to guarantee that such legislation is in full compliance with the Convention, in particular regarding the effective enjoyment of the rights mentioned in article 5, without discrimination;

7. Ensure that legislative guarantees against racial discrimination apply to non-citizens regardless of their immigration status, and that the implementation of legislation does not have a discriminatory effect on non-citizens;

8. Pay greater attention to the issue of multiple discrimination faced by non-citizens, in particular concerning the children and spouses of non-citizen workers, to refrain from applying different standards of treatment to female non-citizen spouses of citizens and male non-citizen spouses of citizens, to report on any such practices and to take all necessary steps to address them;

9. Ensure that immigration policies do not have the effect of discriminating against persons on the basis of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin;

10. Ensure that any measures taken in the fight against terrorism do not discriminate, in purpose or effect, on the grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin and that non-citizens are not subjected to racial or ethnic profiling or stereotyping;

III. Protection against hate speech and racial violence

11. Take steps to address xenophobic attitudes and behaviour towards non-citizens, in particular hate speech and racial violence, and to promote a better understanding of the principle of non-discrimination in respect of the situation of non-citizens;

12. Take resolute action to counter any tendency to target, stigmatize, stereotype or profile, on the basis of race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin, members of “non-citizen” population groups, especially by politicians, officials, educators and the media, on the Internet and other electronic communications networks and in society at large;

IV. Access to citizenship

13. Ensure that particular groups of non-citizens are not discriminated against with regard to access to citizenship or naturalization, and to pay due attention to possible barriers to naturalization that may exist for long-term or permanent residents;

14. Recognize that deprivation of citizenship on the basis of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin is a breach of States parties’ obligations to ensure non-discriminatory enjoyment of the right to nationality;

15. Take into consideration that in some cases denial of citizenship for long-term or permanent residents could result in creating disadvantage for them in access to employment and social benefits, in violation of the Convention’s anti-discrimination principles;

16. Reduce statelessness, in particular statelessness among children, by, for example, encouraging their parents to apply for citizenship on their behalf and allowing both parents to transmit their citizenship to their children;

17. Regularize the status of former citizens of predecessor States who now reside within the jurisdiction of the State party;

V. Administration of justice

18. Ensure that non-citizens enjoy equal protection and recognition before the law and in this context, to take action against racially motivated violence and to ensure the access of victims to effective legal remedies and the right to seek just and adequate reparation for any damage suffered as a result of such violence;

19. Ensure the security of non-citizens, in particular with regard to arbitrary detention, as well as ensure that conditions in centres for refugees and asylum-seekers meet international standards;

20. Ensure that non-citizens detained or arrested in the fight against terrorism are properly protected by domestic law that complies with international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law;

21. Combat ill-treatment of and discrimination against non-citizens by police and other law enforcement agencies and civil servants by strictly applying relevant legislation and regulations

providing for sanctions and by ensuring that all officials dealing with non-citizens receive special training, including training in human rights;

22. Introduce in criminal law the provision that committing an offence with racist motivation or aim constitutes an aggravating circumstance allowing for a more severe punishment;

23. Ensure that claims of racial discrimination brought by non-citizens are investigated thoroughly and that claims made against officials, notably those concerning discriminatory or racist behaviour, are subject to independent and effective scrutiny;

24. Regulate the burden of proof in civil proceedings involving discrimination based on race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin so that once a non-citizen has established a prima facie case that he or she has been a victim of such discrimination, it shall be for the respondent to provide evidence of an objective and reasonable justification for the differential treatment;

VI. Expulsion and deportation of non-citizens

25. Ensure that laws concerning deportation or other forms of removal of non-citizens from the jurisdiction of the State party do not discriminate in purpose or effect among non-citizens on the basis of race, colour or ethnic or national origin, and that non-citizens have equal access to effective remedies, including the right to challenge expulsion orders, and are allowed effectively to pursue such remedies;

26. Ensure that non-citizens are not subject to collective expulsion, in particular in situations where there are insufficient guarantees that the personal circumstances of each of the persons concerned have been taken into account;

27. Ensure that non-citizens are not returned or removed to a country or territory where they are at risk of being subject to serious human rights abuses, including torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

28. Avoid expulsions of non-citizens, especially of long-term residents, that would result in disproportionate interference with the right to family life;

VII. Economic, social and cultural rights

29. Remove obstacles that prevent the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by non-citizens, notably in the areas of education, housing, employment and health;

30. Ensure that public educational institutions are open to non-citizens and children of undocumented immigrants residing in the territory of a State party;

31. Avoid segregated schooling and different standards of treatment being applied to non-citizens on grounds of race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin in elementary and secondary school and with respect to access to higher education;

32. Guarantee the equal enjoyment of the right to adequate housing for citizens and non-citizens, especially by avoiding segregation in housing and ensuring that housing agencies refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices;

33. Take measures to eliminate discrimination against non-citizens in relation to working conditions and work requirements, including employment rules and practices with discriminatory purposes or effects;

34. Take effective measures to prevent and redress the serious problems commonly faced by non-citizen workers, in particular by non-citizen domestic workers, including debt bondage, passport retention, illegal confinement, rape and physical assault;

35. Recognize that, while States parties may refuse to offer jobs to non-citizens without a work permit, all individuals are entitled to the enjoyment of labour and employment rights, including the freedom of assembly and association, once an employment relationship has been initiated until it is terminated;

36. Ensure that States parties respect the right of non-citizens to an adequate standard of physical and mental health by, inter alia, refraining from denying or limiting their access to preventive, curative and palliative health services;

37. Take the necessary measures to prevent practices that deny non-citizens their cultural identity, such as legal or de facto requirements that non-citizens change their name in order to obtain citizenship, and to take measures to enable non-citizens to preserve and develop their culture;

38. Ensure the right of non-citizens, without discrimination based on race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin, to have access to any place or service intended for use by the general public, such as transport, hotels, restaurants, cafés, theatres and parks;

39. The present general recommendation replaces general recommendation XI (1993).