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I. Executive Summary of the fourth cycle of Latvia

On 11 May 2026, the Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) conducted the fourth cycle Universal Periodic Review of Latvia at the Palais des Nations. State Secretary Andžejs Viļumson led the delegation; the troika consisted of the Dominican Republic, France and Pakistan.

The dominant theme by a wide margin was Latvia's standing under the Istanbul Convention. Latvia ratified it on 30 November 2023 (in force 1 May 2024). In autumn 2025, the Saeima initiated a withdrawal procedure and on 30 October 2025 it adopted the Law on Withdrawal (National Report, paragraph 93); on 3 November 2025 President Edgars Rinkēvičs exercised his suspensive veto, returning the law for a second review with a 1 November 2026 deadline, after the 3 October 2026 parliamentary elections. Sweden, Estonia, the Netherlands, Finland, France, the UK, Brazil, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Iceland, Belgium and Ukraine, among many others, urged Latvia to remain a State party.

Hate speech and hate crimes were also recurrent themes during the discussion (with the unresolved gap on sexual orientation and gender identity, and Latvia's non-reporting of hate-crime statistics to OSCE-ODIHR since 2016); the alignment of the national torture definition with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); the 170,463 holders of non-citizen status (as of 1 July 2025); the post-2022 language reforms in education and broadcasting; pushbacks at the Latvia-Belarus border (with thousands of incidents documented in 2024 by civil-society monitoring, and *H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia* pending before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Grand Chamber); and Latvia's reported steps to withdraw from the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, on which UN High Commissioner Volker Türk publicly expressed grave alarm on 2 July 2025.

The delegation highlighted Latvia's 10 December 2021 Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) ratification, the 1 July 2024 entry into force of civil partnerships (613 registered including 235 same-sex in the first year), the new Liepāja Prison concluded in 2025 with full operations from 2026, the Roma Strategic Framework 2024-2027, and the Trafficking Plan 2025-2027. It defended the non-citizen regime through the "restored State" doctrine. Formal positions on the recommendations will be set at the HRC plenary in September or October 2026.

II. Background of Latvia's Political and Social Situation



Governance and political system

Latvia is a parliamentary republic with a 100-seat Saeima. Prime Minister Evika Siliņa has led successive governing coalitions since 15 September 2023; reporting in late 2025 indicates that the coalition was strained by the dispute over the Istanbul Convention. President Edgars Rinkēvičs has been in office since July 2023. Latvia served on the Human Rights Council from 2015 to 2017 and has continued to seek active engagement with the UN system, including through a campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 3 October 2026, meaning the fourth cycle fell in the final months of the current legislature.

Demographic and linguistic context

Latvia's population is approximately 1.87 million. Ethnic Latvians constitute roughly 63%; ethnic Russians, the largest minority, about 25%, concentrated in Riga and Latgale. The Roma community numbers approximately 5,600 (~0.3%, Council of Europe estimate).

As of 1 July 2025, 170,463 residents (~9%, down from ~212,000 in mid-2020) hold the distinctive “non-citizen” (*nepilsonis*) status created after the 1991 restoration of independence; this population is predominantly ethnic Russian, with significant Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian minorities. Non-citizens may reside and work but are barred from voting and from many security-related professions. Only 159 persons are formally registered as legally stateless. Latvia characterises non-citizens as enjoying a regime broader than the 1954 Convention floor; UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Network on Statelessness contest this.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 reshaped Latvia's debate on its Russian-speaking minority. The 2022 Immigration Law amendments required Russian and Belarusian permanent residents to demonstrate Latvian-language proficiency at A2 level; tens of thousands of permanent residents fell within scope, a substantial share of those who took the examination failed it, and several hundred Russian nationals subsequently received deportation notices. The Constitutional Court upheld the framework in 2024.

Russian-language instruction has been phased out of publicly funded schools and minority-language content consolidated into the single public broadcaster. Special procedure mandate holders have considered that the recent legislative changes to limit education in minority languages are contrary to human rights standards and could constitute discrimination. The convergence of UN, Council of Europe and civil-society findings on this point makes the linguistic-minority cluster a structural test of Latvia's declared commitment to non-discrimination, rather than a peripheral concern.

Security and migration pressures on the eastern border

Since 2021 Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have been exposed to instrumentalised migration by Belarus. The Ombudsperson's submission documents the legal architecture: Order No. 518 (August 2021, expired 11 August 2023) restricted asylum access; the “enhanced mode of operation” was introduced via Order No. 514 (August 2023), ended in February 2024 and reintroduced by Order No. 184 (March 2024).

The Ombudsperson's proposal to guarantee asylum-seekers' entry was rejected by Parliament. Civil-society monitoring under the Protecting Rights at Borders initiative documents large-scale pushback incidents in 2024. Litigation is also reported to be pending before the ECHR

concerning alleged pushbacks at the Latvia-Belarus border. The case is *H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia, Lithuania and Poland*. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has reported allegations of severe ill-treatment of migrants at the border in 2021-2022.

The Istanbul Convention crisis

Latvia signed the Istanbul Convention in May 2016 and ratified it on 30 November 2023 (in force since 1 May 2024). In autumn 2025, the Saeima initiated a withdrawal procedure and, on 30 October 2025, it adopted the Law on Withdrawal; on 3 November 2025, President Rinkēvičs decided not to promulgate the law, requesting a second review. The Saeima deferred reconsideration to a second review with a 1 November 2026 deadline, after the 3 October 2026 elections. Latvia remains a State party only contingently.

A second withdrawal flashpoint - the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Paragraph 7 of the Compilation of UN Information records that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, was “gravely alarmed” on 2 July 2025 by steps taken or being considered by Latvia and other States Parties to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, and called on all States to refrain from leaving any treaty pertaining to international humanitarian law. The combination of two simultaneous treaty-withdrawal procedures is unprecedented in Latvia’s UPR engagement and is the central interpretive lens of this report.

III. Background and Critical Perspective on the Subsisting Issues across the Second, Third and Fourth UPR Cycles

Latvia's 2nd cycle (A/HRC/32/15, January 2016) yielded 173 recommendations; at plenary adoption, 127 were accepted, 44 were noted, and 2 were partially clarified. The 2nd cycle review was assisted by a troika comprising Ethiopia, Germany and Indonesia, and was led on Latvia's side by State Secretary Andrejs Pildegovičs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The 3rd cycle (A/HRC/48/15, May 2021) yielded 244 recommendations (numbered 132.1-132.244), of which 145 were accepted, 12 partially accepted, and 87 noted. The 3rd cycle review was assisted by a troika comprising Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Italy and Japan, and was led on Latvia's side by State Secretary Andris Pelšs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Non-citizens and language policy. The 2nd cycle saw at least fourteen recommendations on naturalisation and statelessness, almost all accepted; the 2019 Citizenship Law amendment ended automatic non-citizen status for newborns. In the 3rd cycle Latvia noted (declined) the recommendation to review the State Language Law. Since 2022, the situation has sharpened: thousands of failed language exams, hundreds of deportation notices, and Special procedure mandate holders' concern that the legislative changes to limit minority-language education could constitute discrimination.

Istanbul Convention. Recommended in the 2nd cycle (paragraph 120.34 - Latvia at the time refused to develop "one comprehensive law") and in the 3rd cycle in at least sixteen distinct recommendations. Latvia signed in May 2016, ratified seven years later, and within two years of ratification, the same parliament voted to denounce the most dramatic instance of a UPR-accepted commitment placed in jeopardy within a single decade.

Hate speech and the SOGI gap. In the 2nd-cycle Addendum (paragraph 120.42), Latvia stated that it was "ready to repeatedly assess" the possibility of recognising homophobic and transphobic motivation as an aggravating circumstance in its hate-crime framework. The 3rd cycle delivered more than fifteen SOGI-related recommendations. Latvia's Criminal Law recognises certain aggravating grounds, but the Stakeholders' Summary records the Latvian Centre for Human Rights' recommendation to include sexual orientation and gender identity among hate motives, indicating that this protection is not yet in place.

In 2024 the ECHR ruled in *Hanovs v. Latvia* that Latvia had failed to provide an adequate response to a homophobic attack; the judgment is referenced in the National Report.

OSCE-ODIHR records that Latvia has not reported hate-crime statistics to it since 2016, a full decade.

Asylum and the Belarus border. The 2nd cycle of the UPR delivered procedural recommendations on asylum and reception conditions, while the 3rd cycle hardened this engagement into explicit non-refoulement language. The dominant explanation for the persistence of this regime is the security context: indeed, the instrumentalisation of migration by Belarus presents Latvia with circumstances that earlier-cycle procedural recommendations did not anticipate.

However, the indefinite emergency derogations, the legislative entrenchment of pushbacks and the credible allegations of ill-treatment documented by the CPT go materially beyond what the security context strictly requires, and reflect a policy choice rather than necessity. Earlier-cycle recommendations remain relevant precisely because the structural rights framework they invoked has been displaced rather than absorbed. Since 2021, the structural challenge has been the pushback regime; the *H.M.M.* judgment expected in 2026 will be the next inflection point but is not self-executing.

Roma. The 2nd-cycle Addendum (paragraph 120.76) stated as “already implemented” that “there are no separate classes for Roma pupils since the academic year 2013/2014”. The Latvian Centre for Human Rights’ 4th-cycle submission reports that in 2016-2017 Romani students accounted for 22.4% of learning-difficulty programmes and 39% of special education for intellectual disabilities, confirmed by the Ombudsperson in 2022. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)’s March 2025 report confirms the situation remains uneven.

Freedom of religion - Jehovah’s Witnesses. The 4th-cycle Stakeholders’ Summary records, for the first time in any of Latvia’s UPR cycles, that the General Prosecutor has issued a threat to ban the community, and that its ministers cannot register marriages, conduct prison visits on equal terms or hold confidential pastoral conversations.

Conscientious objection and the Youth Guard. Novel to the 4th cycle. The Human Rights Committee recommends placing conscientious-objector assessment (the procedure by which an application for exemption from compulsory military service on grounds of conscience is reviewed and decided) under civilian rather than Ministry of Defence authorities; Connection e.V. asks for a genuinely civilian alternative. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed deep concern that children from age 10 may participate in the Ministry-run “Youth Guard” voluntary programme, including in activities involving weapons.

Economic, social and cultural rights. The European Committee of Social Rights has found Latvia not in conformity with Article 12§1 of the European Social Charter (ESC), minimum pensions, unemployment and disability benefits are too low. This is a binding-style adverse finding that follows directly on 3rd-cycle recommendation 132.166. The asymmetry between Latvia's strong Civil and Political Rights presentation and weak ESC-rights record is structural.

Outstanding ratifications. Latvia is not a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW), the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for time of war, the 1961 Statelessness Convention, or the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (added in this cycle by International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapon's submission).

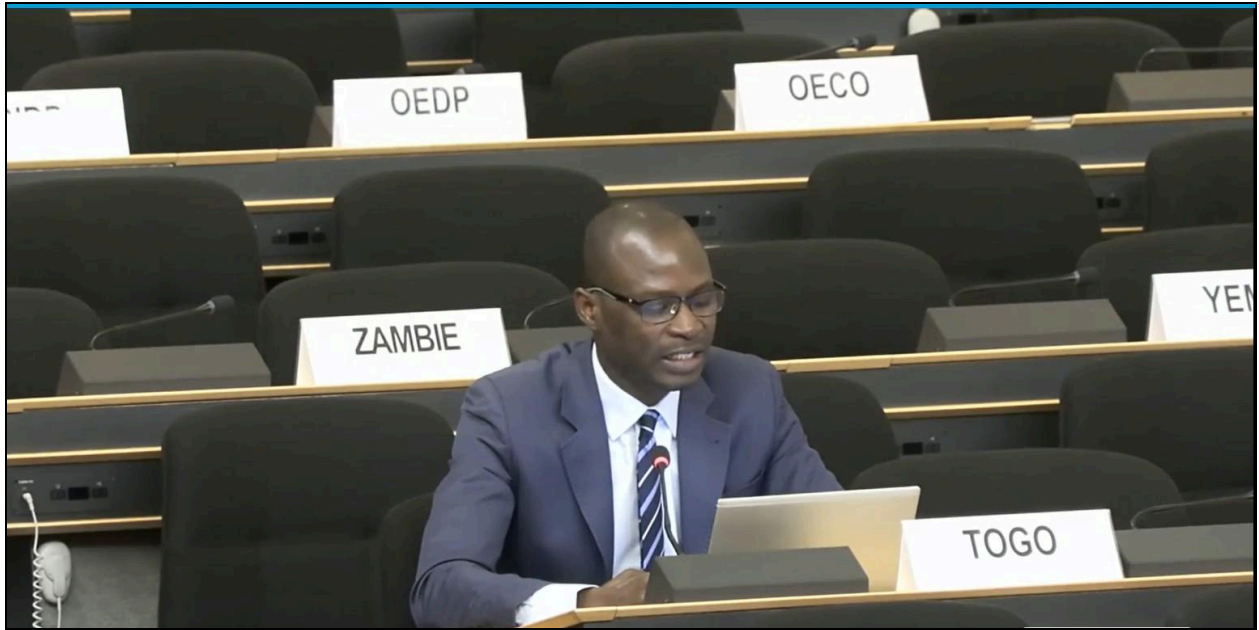
On ICRMW the 2nd-cycle Addendum (120.20-120.26) is unusually candid: "the ratification of the Convention is not on the agenda of the Government", and the position has not moved in ten years. The OPCAT trajectory provides the contrasting precedent: partially accepted in 2016, ratified on 10 December 2021 (in force 9 January 2022). Prolonged ratification is feasible; the question for the remaining instruments is whether the OPCAT trajectory is being followed.

IV. Exhaustive Summary of Latvia's 4th UPR cycle



1. Opening statement by Latvia. State Secretary Andžejs Viļumson acknowledged at the outset that “none of us, including Latvia, has a perfect human-rights record”. He placed Latvia’s trajectory in its regional security context (Russia’s war, refugee management, eastern-border hardening, information-space protection), and listed recent progress: OPCAT ratification; Istanbul Convention ratification; civil partnerships; the constitutional anchoring of equality; the end of automatic non-citizen status for newborns. The delegation insisted Latvia is a “restored State”, not a successor.

2. Interactive dialogue - recommendations by theme.



(a) *Gender-based violence and the Istanbul Convention.* This was the dominant theme by a wide margin. A substantial group of delegations from all regional groups urged Latvia not to denounce the Istanbul Convention and to instead implement it fully. Recommending States recurrently called on Latvia to criminalise intimate-partner violence as a stand-alone offence and to adopt consent-based sexual-offence legislation. They further asked the State to strengthen its national referral mechanisms, to fully fund the Plan for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2024-2029, and to engage men and boys in violence-prevention work. The Nordic-Baltic neighbours and the UK framed the “remain a State party” and put forward the recommendation most directly.

(b) *Hate speech and hate crime.* Hate speech and hate crime emerged as the second-most discussed cluster of the dialogue. Delegations asked Latvia to adopt explicit hate-crime protections covering sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, and to resume hate-crime data reporting to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR). Recommending States also called for specialised training of law-enforcement, prosecutors and the judiciary, and for the protection of journalists from online attacks and harassment.

(c) *Torture.* Several delegations called for alignment of the national torture definition with Article 1 CAT. Implementation of the Nelson Mandela Rules were also raised; Belarus raised allegations of ill-treatment by border guards.

(d) *Non-citizens, statelessness and linguistic minorities.* A notable group of delegations addressed this cluster. Recommends: accelerated naturalisation; safeguards in language reforms;

recognition of minority-language rights; lifting Latvia's reservation to the 1954 Convention. Two politically distinctive interventions: Belarus called for compensation for Belarusian medical workers dismissed under language measures; Russia referred to a 71-year-old man imprisoned in connection with the Russian language.

(e) Migrants, asylum-seekers and non-refoulement at the Belarus border. Delegations across regional groups intervened repeatedly on this cluster. They asked Latvia to ensure full respect for the principle of non-refoulement and effective asylum access at all border crossings, and to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW). Recommending States further called for independent investigation of pushback, detention and ill-treatment allegations, and for reception conditions meeting international standards.



(f) LGBTIQ+ rights. Several delegations addressed LGBTIQ+ rights. They asked Latvia to adopt explicit SOGI hate-crime protections, to extend legal recognition of same-sex couples on a par with opposite-sex couples (including adoption and inheritance), and to legalise same-sex marriage. Additional recommendations included the prohibition of conversion therapy and the introduction of comprehensive sexuality education in schools.

(g) Children's rights. A notable group of delegations addressed children's rights. Recurrent themes included the protection of children from digital and online violence, the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive education, and the prohibition of detaining children for immigration-related purposes. Delegations also called for reform of the orphan-court system

(raised specifically by Spain), inclusive education for children with disabilities, and the prioritisation of family-based alternatives to institutional care.

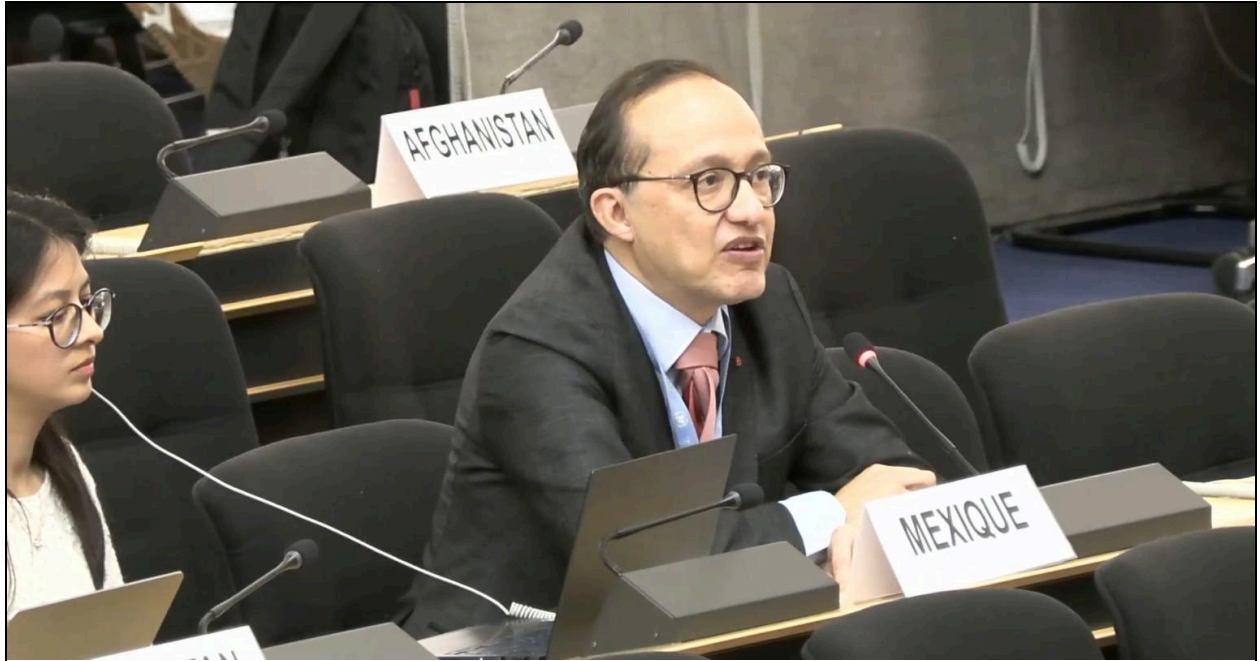
(h) Persons with disabilities. Several delegations encouraged Latvia to continue its deinstitutionalisation process and to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities. The question of accessibility was also tackled, with recommending States asking Latvia to carry out systematic audits of its public infrastructure. Beyond that, delegations pressed for stronger labour-market support and for the expansion of personal-assistance services for persons with disabilities.

(i) Roma. Several delegations called on Latvia to fully implement its Roma Strategic Framework 2024-2027. The integration of Roma children into mainstream schools was also raised, as was the question of whether Latvia is willing to formally recognise antigypsyism as a specific form of racism, a step many recommending States considered overdue.

(j) Trafficking. A notable group of delegations urged Latvia to operationalise the National Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2025-2027 and to finally adopt the long-pending victim-referral law. The need for genuinely victim-centred protection was strongly emphasised, while several delegations also called for specialised training of border guards and consular officials so that frontline actors can actually identify trafficking situations.

(k) Climate and economic rights. Many delegations raised the question of Latvia's implementation of its Paris Agreement targets, while Portugal questioned Latvia's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR). The issue of the gender pay gap was also tackled by several delegations.

(l) Judicial independence and the Ombudsman. Several delegations raised judicial independence and Paris-Principles compliance.



(m) *Ottawa Convention.* Mexico urged Latvia to maintain the goals of the Convention. Read against paragraph 7 of the Compilation, which records the United Nations High Commissioner’s public alarm of 2 July 2025 at Latvia’s reported steps to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, this cluster represents a second potential treaty withdrawal alongside the Istanbul Convention.

(n) *Other ratifications.* Recommending States returned, throughout the dialogue, to a recurring set of ratifications they expect Latvia to undertake. Several delegations urged Latvia to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW). The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW) was also raised, together with the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims at the abolition of the death penalty. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) further called on Latvia to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). On statelessness and refugee protection, recommending States asked Latvia to lift its reservations to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and to accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.



3. Replies by Latvia. Latvia delivered three rounds of replies, with interventions from the Ombudsman’s Office and the Ministries of Welfare, Culture, Education, Health, and Justice, as well as from the Prosecutor General’s Office. The delegation highlighted that civil partnerships have been in force since 1 July 2024, with 613 partnerships including 235 same-sex partnerships registered in the first year. It noted that the Ombudsman serves as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), and that the State has established a specialised hate-crime prosecution function.

The delegation further reported that the new Liepāja Prison, whose construction was concluded in 2025 with full operations from 2026 after the completion of procurement, allows for the closure of three older facilities. Latvia also pointed to the Plan for Implementing Measures of the Roma Strategic Framework 2024-2027, with Roma mediators deployed in eight municipalities, and to the National Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2025-2027 together with the draft referral-mechanism law.

Additional measures referenced by the delegation included the transposition of the European Union Pay Transparency Directive, the introduction of non-transferable parental leave, the development of community-based services for persons with disabilities, and the 2050 climate-neutrality target, which is currently under review.

4. Assessment of engagement. The Latvian delegation was active and prepared, yet selectively responsive throughout the dialogue. The pattern reveals a tactical engagement model: the

delegation invested heavily in defensible technical achievements, such as the new Liepāja Prison, the partnerships legislation, and the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) architecture established under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), while sidestepping the contentious clusters where Latvia’s compliance with its UPR commitments is most in doubt. This selectivity was most striking on the Istanbul Convention, where the legislative procedure to withdraw is itself the principal regression risk of the cycle yet was never named in the delegation’s replies. The non-citizen framework was defended via the “restored State” doctrine, while the language reforms were defended by reference to a 2024 Constitutional Court judgment upholding the framework. Overall, the delegation showed its strongest engagement on partnerships and prisons, was defensive on non-citizens, and was evasive on the Istanbul Convention.

V. Recommendations Section

V.1 Women's rights and gender-based violence

A broad coalition of European delegations (including Sweden, Estonia, the Netherlands, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Iceland, Belgium and Ukraine, joined by Brazil and a number of others) urged Latvia to refrain from denouncing the Istanbul Convention and to remain a State party.

Beyond the question of non-denunciation, recommending States pressed Latvia to fully implement the Convention itself, in particular by adopting consent-based sexual-offence legislation. The need for a comprehensive, and adequately funded, national plan against intimate-partner violence and femicide was also stressed by a number of delegations.

On gender equality more broadly, a different group of delegations (Bahrain, China, Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, Slovenia and Sri Lanka) called on Latvia to narrow its persistent gender pay gap and to increase the representation of women in political and economic decision-making.

V.2 Hate speech, hate crime and SOGI protection

On hate crime, a group of largely Western and Northern European delegations (Canada, France, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom) pressed Latvia to adopt explicit hate-crime protections covering sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, a gap repeatedly identified across the cycle.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE-ODIHR) and the Latvian Centre for Human Rights also took up the issue, asking Latvia to resume timely reporting of hate-crime statistics to OSCE-ODIHR, a body which has recorded no Latvian reporting since 2016, a full decade of silence.

Beyond reporting, those interventions further called for the establishment of an inter-institutional working group on hate crime and of a dedicated State Police unit on the same issue.

V.3 Torture and ill-treatment

Several delegations (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Iraq and Venezuela) called on Latvia to align its national definition of torture with Article 1 of the Convention against Torture (CAT). Belarus further asked Latvia to independently investigate allegations of ill-treatment of migrants by border guards.

V.4 Minority rights and language policy

A range of delegations (China, India, Indonesia, Iran, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and Norway) pressed Latvia to ensure linguistic minorities' right to use, learn and access information in their own language, and to implement education and broadcasting reforms with appropriate safeguards.

On the Roma community, Australia, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Mexico and Rwanda urged Latvia to fully implement the 2024-2027 Roma Strategic Framework, to integrate Roma children into mainstream schools and to formally recognise antigypsyism as a specific form of racism.

V.5 Non-citizens and statelessness

Recommending States urged Latvia to accelerate the naturalisation process for non-citizens and to lower its associated fees. Iraq further called on Latvia to lift its reservation to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, while Costa Rica asked Latvia to bring its nationality legislation into compliance with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

V.6 Migrants, asylum and non-refoulement

Delegations from across regional groups (Brazil, Costa Rica, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Uruguay, joined on a different note by Belarus) urged Latvia to respect non-refoulement at all border crossings and to independently investigate pushback, detention and ill-treatment allegations, including those documented by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and those at the heart of the pending H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia, Lithuania and Poland case before the European Court of Human Rights.

The Ombudsperson, the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and joint submission JS2 further asked Latvia to amend the State Border Guard Law and Order Nos. 518, 514 and 184 to guarantee asylum-seekers' effective entry, and to allow press, independent monitors and humanitarian volunteers access to the border. Algeria, Indonesia, Iran and Morocco additionally called on Latvia to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW).

V.7 Trafficking in persons

Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon and Moldova urged Latvia to operationalise the 2025-2027 National Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings and to finally adopt the long-pending victim-referral law. Beyond that, many other delegations pressed Latvia to strengthen investigation, prosecution and victim protection, and to provide systematic training to front-line personnel.

V.8 Children's rights

Albania, Colombia and Iceland called on Latvia to strengthen child protection against digital violence and to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive education in schools. Colombia, the Republic of Korea and Sweden further asked Latvia to refrain from detaining children and to prioritise family-based alternatives wherever possible.

V.9 LGBTIQ+ rights

Canada, Germany and Sweden called on Latvia to extend the legal recognition of same-sex couples (including in matters of adoption and inheritance) on a par with opposite-sex couples. Iceland went further still, urging Latvia to legalise same-sex marriage and to prohibit conversion therapy.

V.10 Persons with disabilities

Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Oman, Slovakia, the Republic of Korea and Slovenia called on Latvia to ensure inclusive education with adequate teaching support, and to continue its deinstitutionalisation process alongside the further development of community-based services for persons with disabilities.

V.11 Judicial independence and the Ombudsman

Georgia, the Gambia, Lithuania, Canada and Algeria asked Latvia to ensure full Paris-Principles compliance of the Office of the Ombudsman and to safeguard judicial independence in appointments to the bench.

V.12 Freedom of expression and media pluralism

The Republic of Korea, Azerbaijan and several other delegations called on Latvia to protect journalists from harassment and online attacks, and to ensure that public-broadcaster reforms preserve effective minority-language access.

V.13 Climate and economic, social and cultural rights

On climate, Maldives and Sri Lanka asked Latvia to meet its 2050 net-zero target and to implement the 2026-2030 emission-reduction plan in full. On economic and social rights, the European Committee of Social Rights and submissions referencing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) urged Latvia to raise minimum pensions and unemployment and disability benefits so that they meet the Article 12§1 adequacy standards of the European Social Charter. Portugal further called on Latvia to ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR (OP-ICESCR).

V.14 Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Mexico, joined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in his statement of 2 July 2025, called on Latvia to maintain the goals of the Convention and to continue its full implementation. They further urged Latvia to refrain from any withdrawal procedure from the Ottawa Convention or from any other treaty pertaining to international humanitarian law.

V.15 Outstanding instruments to ratify

Recommending States returned in the closing rounds to a recurring list of treaties that Latvia is urged to ratify. These include the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW), the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as urged by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR), International Labour Organization Convention No. 174 on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents, and the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) further asked Latvia to lift its reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention and to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

VI. Remarks by the representative of Latvia



Human Rights challenges as framed by the State. State Secretary Andžejs Viļumson opened by thanking civil-society organisations for what he called their “invaluable” contributions, acknowledging that “none of us, including Latvia, has a perfect human-rights record” and that “there is always room for improvement”.

He framed Latvia’s trajectory firmly in its regional security context: COVID-19 and Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, he argued, have imposed responsibilities on Latvia ranging from refugee management to the defence of borders, and the country’s development since the third cycle should be read “in the context of the biggest war on European soil since the Second World War”.

He invoked the 2008 Russia-Georgia war as part of the same pattern and observed that “you cannot choose your neighbours but you can choose your friends”. Russia’s rhetoric, he argued, does not limit itself to territorial ambitions, requiring Latvia to defend its democracy and national security through digital resilience against hybrid threats, the digitalisation of democratic processes, and the promotion of civic participation.

The 170,463 holders of non-citizen status were presented as a long-term integration challenge. The Saeima’s 30 October 2025 vote to denounce the Istanbul Convention was not addressed as a State-attributable human-rights challenge.

Presentation of the National Report. The National Report (A/HRC/WG.6/52/LVA/1) was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through an inter-institutional working group,

approved by the Government on 27 January 2026, and covers Latvia’s record from 2021 to 2025. The Report acknowledges in paragraph 93 the 30 October 2025 Withdrawal Law and the President’s veto. It does not address the Ottawa Convention withdrawal, the Belarus-border pushback regime, the threat against the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the ECSR’s non-conformity finding. The State Secretary also signalled Latvia’s intention to seek a future seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Cooperation with UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures. The delegation underlined Latvia’s standing invitation to all Special Procedure mandate holders, noting that Latvia was one of the first countries to have issued such an invitation, the centralised national framework integrating treaty-body recommendations into government action plans, OPCAT ratification (10 December 2021), the Ombudsman’s role as National Preventive Mechanism, and the Human Rights Committee dialogue concluding 17 July 2025 (CCPR/C/LVA/CO/4). It did not engage substantively with the Special Procedure 18 mandate holders’ concerns on Latvia’s language reforms or the High Commissioner’s 2 July 2025 alarm on the Ottawa Convention.

Efforts to improve human rights. Specific responses from seven line ministries and the Prosecutor General’s Office:



- ***Ministry of Education and Science.*** The number of children with special needs in education is increasing; capacity for teaching assistants has been enhanced specifically for Roma children; Roma mediators cooperate with schools. Ukrainian children have been guaranteed education since the start of the war. Latvia’s emerging framework on technology-assisted learning is designed to keep AI in education “safe and trustworthy” and to reduce teacher workload.



- *Ministry of Justice (Ombudsman and good governance)*. The Ombudsman is independent of the executive and acts as National Preventive Mechanism under OPCAT, with a significant increase in applications received over the past year. The Lobbying Law entered into force in 2023 and a unified framework on public participation has been operational since 2021, with the corresponding online portal receiving international recognition. Civil partnerships, in force since 1 July 2024, provide equal protection to same-sex and opposite-sex couples in taxation, medical decision-making and inheritance.
- *Ministry of Welfare (gender equality and disability)*. In response to Sweden, Belgium and other delegations on the Istanbul Convention, the Ministry of Welfare reported the adoption of the first national action plan and the engagement of men and boys in prevention. The Ministry further presented measures on non-transferable parental leave and enhanced paternity leave, as well as broader work-life balance reforms. It also pointed to the transposition of the European Union Pay Transparency Directive, the development of community-based services for persons with disabilities, the emerging long-term care financing model, and policies in support of older persons' longer working lives.
- *Ministry of Culture (social cohesion and minorities)*. Recent broadcaster reforms, the Minister argued, aim to strengthen social cohesion through Latvian-language fact-based information. The consolidation does not aim to exclude but to move away from a segregated model through intercultural dialogue, and the resulting multimedia studio retains a rich minority presence. The Constitutional Court has upheld the State's duty to uphold the Latvian language while ensuring minorities access to information in their own language

where there is objective necessity (such as countering disinformation). The Minister referred to an Action Plan on the Reduction of Racism and to the State's recognition of antigypsyism as a form of racism, and pointed to the third Minority Cultural Festival in Liepāja.



- *Ministry of Health.* The Ministry of Health reported improvements in regional access to medicine and in patient-centred care, as well as the expansion of State-funded medical residencies and an increase in nursing-study places. It further pointed to improvements in compulsory psychiatric treatment and to the 2025-2027 plan on maternal and child health, which has contributed to continued reductions in maternal mortality and to a strengthened role for midwives.



- *Ministry of the Interior (trafficking, Gender-based Violence, hate crime and the border).* The integrated trafficking-victim referral framework is being advanced through the 2025-2027 Plan, and large-scale training has now reached several hundred border guards. The 2025 amendment to the Criminal Procedure Law on protection against violence has already been applied in several cases. Hate speech, the Ministry stressed, remains a State Police priority, and a delegated liaison officer has been appointed for the LGBTIQ+ community. On the situation at the border, the Ministry framed neighbouring countries as exerting a form of hybrid pressure and insisted that Latvia applies an individual assessment to each case, including the principle of non-refoulement.
- *Ministry of Justice (criminal law and prisons).* Following Istanbul Convention ratification, the Criminal Law has been strengthened on physical harm and a new Article 174¹ on “cruelty and violence against close family members” was introduced on 4 July 2024 (National Report, paragraph 50). A complete rehabilitation course for perpetrators was introduced in 2021. The new Liepāja Prison, whose construction was concluded in 2025 with full operations commencing in 2026 following the completion of procurement, allows for the closure of three Soviet-era facilities.
- *Prosecutor General’s Office.* A coordinating prosecutor has been appointed for cases of violence against women and a separate one for hate-crime cases, with mandatory training cycles for prosecutors, lawyers and judges; senior prosecutors review case files at least once every two months to prevent delays.

Response to delegate comments. The members of Latvia’s delegation were selective and defensive in their response to delegate comments. Indeed, sensitive topics such as the Istanbul

Convention withdrawal were not addressed directly. Furthermore, the non-citizen framework was defended through the “restored State” doctrine, with the delegation reiterating that the 170,463 holders of non-citizen status are not stateless within the meaning of the 1954 Convention. In support of this position, the delegation noted that the Constitutional Court has, in a 2024 judgment, upheld the framework.

The delegation did not respond directly to either of the politically distinctive interventions raised in the dialogue: Russia’s reference to a 71-year-old man imprisoned in connection with the Russian language, and Belarus’s call for compensation for Belarusian medical workers dismissed under language-related measures, both went unaddressed in the recorded replies. The Minister of Culture’s general defence of the language reforms, by reference to the Constitutional Court’s 2024 judgment and to the consolidation of the public broadcaster, was the closest the delegation came to engaging the cluster.

In its closing round, the delegation confirmed the 2050 climate-neutrality target (under review) and the 2026-2030 emission-reduction plan, as well as commitments to promote air-quality levels consistent with international standards. The State Secretary closed by thanking all delegations and the troika, and by committing to giving careful consideration to each of the recommendations received.

VII. Looking Forward: new priorities of the International Community and commitments of Latvia

Commitments announced during the dialogue. First, Latvia committed to the continued implementation of the Istanbul Convention's first action plan, including the engagement of men and boys in prevention, the training of police and the judiciary, the criminal-procedure amendments and the perpetrator-rehabilitation requirement introduced in 2021.

Second, the delegation promised to operationalise the Trafficking Plan 2025-2027 and to secure the swift adoption of the victim-referral law.

Third, across line ministries, Latvia further committed to pursue a series of institutional projects: the new Liepāja Prison and the closure of three Soviet-era facilities; the Plan for Implementing Measures of the Roma Strategic Framework 2024-2027 with mediators in eight municipalities; the transposition of the EU Pay Transparency Directive; the non-transferable parental-leave reform; the continued development of community-based services for persons with disabilities and an emerging long-term care financing model; the 2050 climate-neutrality target (under review) and the 2026-2030 emission-reduction plan; and AI-assisted pilot programmes in education.

Five clusters are structurally unlikely to be resolved before the fifth cycle. (1) The non-citizen regime will shrink through attrition but its architecture and political stakes will persist. (2) Language and broadcasting reforms are constitutionally entrenched. (3) The Belarus-border framework is unlikely to be dismantled while instrumentalisation continues; the *H.M.M.* judgment will be the next inflection point but is not self-executing. (4) Explicit SOGI hate-crime protection requires a parliamentary majority unlikely to emerge absent further ECHR pressure and Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination /ICCPR follow-up. (5) The ECSR non-conformity finding on Article 12§1 will require sustained budgetary reform in a fiscal environment dominated by defence spending.

The decisive variable for the 5th cycle is the 3 October 2026 parliamentary election. The executive favours Istanbul-Convention implementation; the current Saeima voted to denounce; the next legislature will be the operative event for the cycle.

The fifth cycle will most plausibly turn on whether the Istanbul Convention status survived the elections, whether Latvia also remains a State party to the Ottawa Convention, whether *H.M.M.* produced material reform of the eastern-border framework, and whether the language reforms have been implemented with safeguards consistent with the concerns expressed by Special procedure mandate holders.

VIII. Personal Critical Analysis

- **What is minimised or absent from the three documents**

The National Report (paragraph 93) candidly records the Istanbul Convention withdrawal procedure, but Latvia is reporting on a treaty whose denunciation is, at submission time, an active legislative procedure. Read alongside paragraph 7 of the Compilation (the High Commissioner's 2 July 2025 alarm on the Ottawa Convention), the two-treaty regression risk is the central interpretive frame of the cycle, and only a synthetic reading of all three documents brings it into view.

The reasons States invoke for considering withdrawal (perceived sovereignty intrusion, contested cultural framings, securitisation of foreign policy) are political rather than legal, but the UPR mechanism as currently designed has limited tools to address them. The cycle's peer-review character means that ratification commitments accepted in one cycle are not formally protected against denunciation in the next.

The UPR could be strengthened in two practical ways. First, when a State begins a procedure to withdraw from a human-rights or international humanitarian law treaty to which it is already committed, the Working Group should require an immediate follow-up report rather than waiting for the State's next regular review, which is held only every four and a half years. Second, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights could publish, alongside the recommendations adopted in each cycle, a short list of treaties that any State has signalled it may leave, so that the international community can track these risks early.

The National Report does not engage with the pushback regime at the Latvia-Belarus border. It also does not address the pending Grand Chamber case before the European Court of Human Rights in *H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia, Lithuania and Poland* (ECtHR, hearing of 12 February 2025, judgment pending), nor the allegations of ill-treatment documented by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and Amnesty International.

These elements are instead supplied by the Ombudsperson's submission to the Stakeholders' Summary. On hate crime the National Report (paragraph 39) acknowledges *Hanovs v. Latvia*, the absence of any Latvian reporting to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE-ODIHR) since 2016.

The Stakeholders' Summary surfaces several issues that did not appear in the interactive dialogue but which sharpen the analytical record. Joint submission JS2 documents a pattern of administrative prosecutions in Latvia against organisers of pro-Palestine protests, raising

concerns about Latvia's compliance with freedom of assembly under Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

On freedom of religion, the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (EAJW) reports a threat issued by the General Prosecutor to ban the religious community, a measure which would engage Article 18 ICCPR and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The German non-governmental organisation Connection e.V. raises further concerns about the absence of any civilian alternative to compulsory military service in Latvia and about the participation of children from age 10 in the Ministry-of-Defence-run "Youth Guard" programme, a practice difficult to reconcile with the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) urges Latvia to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). On hate crime, OSCE-ODIHR confirms that Latvia has not submitted statistics to it since 2016, a decade-long silence. Finally, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) has found Latvia not in conformity with Article 12§1 of the European Social Charter on the adequacy of minimum social-security benefits and pensions.

- **Limits of the UPR mechanism**

The cycle illustrates three limiting factors. First, recommendations are made by States, not by independent experts; some interventions (notably the Russian Federation and Belarus) operate as bilateral contestation.

Second, the binary "accepted/noted" categories permit refusal without consequence. Third, the four-and-a-half-year periodicity allows structural recommendations to be deferred indefinitely: the Istanbul Convention sequence (recommended 2016; ratified 2023; attempted withdrawal 2025) shows how a State can move through multiple positions within a decade without falling outside the UPR's own rules.

- **The problem of self-reporting**

Self-reporting rests on the good faith of the State. The Latvian National Report is technically accurate but rhetorically curated: the framing of non-citizen status as a long-term integration matter, the presentation of language reforms as social cohesion, and the omission of the Ottawa Convention withdrawal show how self-reporting permits a State to define the legal frame within which its actions are measured. Independent expertise (UN treaty bodies, Special Procedures, ECRI, CPT, ECSR, NGOs) is therefore a structural counterweight, not a supplement. The Special

24 procedure mandate holders' findings on Latvia's language reforms demonstrate the value of that counterweight.

IX. GICJ Position

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) acknowledges Latvia's continued engagement with the Universal Periodic Review process and the progress made since the third cycle, in particular Latvia's OPCAT ratification (10 December 2021), Istanbul Convention ratification (30 November 2023), the entry into force of civil partnerships on 1 July 2024 (613 registered including 235 same-sex in the first year), the commissioning of the new Liepāja Prison in 2025 with full operations from 2026, the Roma Strategic Framework 2024-2027, and the National Report's explicit acknowledgment (paragraph 39) of *Hanovs v. Latvia*.

However, GICJ is particularly concerned by the combination of two simultaneous treaty-withdrawal procedures unprecedented in Latvia's UPR engagement : the Saeima's adoption on 30 October 2025 of the Law on Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (currently in second review until 1 November 2026), and Latvia's reported steps to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, on which the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights publicly expressed grave alarm on 2 July 2025.

Furthermore, GICJ is alarmed by the documented pushbacks and ill-treatment of migrants at the Latvia-Belarus border now before the ECHR Grand Chamber in the *H.M.M.* case. GICJ is equally concerned by the persistent SOGI hate-crime protection gap and the decade-long absence of Latvian reporting to OSCE-ODIHR.

It is further alarmed by the incomplete alignment of the national torture definition with Article 1 CAT, by the General Prosecutor's reported threat against the Jehovah's Witnesses, and by the participation of children from age 10 in the State-supported "Youth Guard" together with the absence of a civilian alternative to military service. GICJ also notes the ECSR's finding of non-conformity with Article 12§1 of the European Social Charter, the persistence of the 170,463-person non-citizen regime, and the cumulative impact of the post-2022 language reforms identified by Special Procedure mandate holders.

All in all, GICJ stresses the urgent need for Latvia to refrain definitively from withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention, the Ottawa Convention and any other human rights or IHL treaty. GICJ recommends Latvia; to amend Order Nos. 518, 514 and 184 and the State Border Guard Law to guarantee effective asylum access, to align the torture definition with Article 1 CAT, to extend hate-crime protection expressly to SOGI and to resume OSCE-ODIHR reporting. Moreover, GICJ would like for Latvia to accelerate naturalisation and provide language-reform safeguards, to bring minimum pensions and benefits into conformity with Article 12§1 of the European Social Charter, to provide a genuinely civilian alternative to military service and ban military

training with weapons for students under-18. Finally, GICJ recommends Latvia to ratify ICCPED, ICRMW, the 1961 Statelessness Convention and the TPNW.

GICJ further supports the Member States recommendations urging Latvia to align the torture definition with Article 1 CAT to guarantee freedom of religion on equal terms, and to bring social-benefit adequacy in line with the European Social Charter, and to ratify the outstanding treaties.

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