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**HUMAN RIGHTS IN DENMARK:  
SOCIETAL CHANGE REQUIRES  
REALISTIC SOLUTIONS**



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## I. Executive Summary of The Fourth Cycle of Denmark

This executive summary of the fourth cycle provides a comprehensive and unified overview of the human rights situation in the Kingdom of Denmark by integrating and analysing three main sources: Denmark's official national report to the Human Rights Council, information compiled from the United Nations system including observations from treaty bodies, and reports from 16 Civil Society Organisations, known as "Stakeholder Information". The summary aims to offer an objective and balanced assessment that acknowledges both the achievements made and the challenges that remain.

### **Legal and Institutional Framework**

#### *- Engagement in The International Human Rights System*

Denmark maintains a strong presence in the international human rights system. It is a party to eight of the nine core human rights treaties and ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in January 2022, as well as International Labour Organisation Convention number 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work in 2024. Denmark is a standing participant in the Human Rights Council's special procedures, which reinforces its commitment to international monitoring mechanisms.

Denmark has decided not to sign the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW), as requested by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Although Denmark has ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), Denmark has rejected the individual right of appeal to the Committee under the convention.

#### *- National Human Rights Institutions*

The Human Rights Committee recommended strengthening the independence and effectiveness of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, including amending the Act on the Danish Institute for Human Rights to ensure legal protection for its members and staff, and securing sufficient funding for Danish Institute for Human Rights to carry out its oversight functions effectively.

### **Equality and non-Discrimination**

#### *- The Legislative Framework for Equality*

Denmark has established a comprehensive legislative framework to combat discrimination, including the Act on Gender Equality, the Act on Equal Treatment of Men and Women as regards Access to Employment, the Act on Prohibition against Discrimination on the Labour Market, the Act on Ethnic Equal Treatment, the Act on Prohibition against Discrimination on Grounds of Race, and finally the Act on Prohibition against Discrimination on Grounds of Disability. The Danish Board of Equal Treatment is responsible for adjudicating discrimination complaints, awarding compensation, and overturning unfair dismissals.

#### *- Gender Equality*

Parental leave reform (August 2022): Each parent is entitled to 24 weeks of paid leave, with the possibility of transferring part of it to the other parent.

On 1 January 2023, amendments to the Danish Corporation Tax Act and the Danish Tax Assessment Act entered into force: These amendments aimed to promote balanced gender representation on the boards of directors in private companies as well as in the public sector.

In December 2024, additional rules were introduced requiring large listed companies to achieve a specific gender representation ratio of 40/60 on their boards of Directors. Under these rules, if companies fail to achieve such a target by June 30, 2026, they are obligated to amend their candidate selection mechanisms for board membership, ensuring these mechanisms are based on clear, neutral, and unambiguous criteria, to be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner.

- *Combating Racial Discrimination — Existing Concerns*

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination observed a significant gap between officially recorded cases and the more widespread discrimination revealed by surveys. The Committee also criticised the use of the terms "Western" and "non-Western" in legislation and policies, deeming them a source of stigma and marginalisation. Similarly, the same Committee described the laws known as the "Ghetto Package" as having a discriminatory impact on ethnic minorities, particularly by classifying certain areas as "parallel communities" based on the proportion of their "non-Western" population.

**The Right to Life, Liberty and Personal Security**

- *Torture and Detention Conditions*

The Committee against Torture expressed concern over the absence of explicit criminalisation of torture as a separate offense in the Danish Penal Code. Moreover, the Committee recommended that Denmark make torture a punishable offence *per se*. Regarding detention conditions, reports revealed that some detainees awaiting trial spend nearly 23 hours a day in their cells, almost completely isolated from the outside world, reflecting severe overcrowding and staff shortages in pretrial detention facilities, while acknowledging that material conditions in prisons in Denmark were generally of a high quality.

Solitary confinement: The Committee expressed its deep concern about the use of solitary confinement for extended periods, particularly with regard to juveniles, calling for its use to be restricted and limited to cases of extreme necessity.

Police complaints: Many complaints filed against the police were closed without any meaningful investigation, raising serious questions about the availability of effective accountability mechanisms. Civil society organisations are calling for the Independent Police Complaints Authority's mandate to be expanded to include a systematic assessment of human rights violations.

Technological surveillance: The police use facial recognition technology without a clear and specific legal basis, which necessitates an explicit legislative framework that regulates the limits of this use and its safeguards.

**The Most Vulnerable Groups**

- *Women's Rights*

The National Action Plan to combat intimate partner violence (2023-2026) was launched, and a commission was established to address homicides within intimate partnerships. However, the Committee against Torture have raised concerns about the situation of women residing in the country on family-based residency permits, who often find themselves forced to remain in abusive relationships for fear of deportation. Therefore, it is recommended that Denmark adopt a renewed national action plan to combat violence against women and introduce a dedicated offence code for intimate partner homicide in the police case management system.

- *Children's Rights*

The Committee against Torture expressed concern about certain cases where children under social care are placed in secure accommodation centers alongside children serving custodial sentences. Accordingly, the Committee and civil society organisations recommended the following to Denmark:

- Ensure that children are placed in facilities that meet their specific needs, with placement in closed facilities being an exceptional measure, used as a last resort, and for the shortest possible time.
- Adopt a comprehensive national strategy for preventing and combating violence against children, including strengthening awareness and education programs, increasing awareness of the criminalisation of psychological violence against children, and ensuring the strict application of the relevant laws.

- *Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities observed a significant increase in the use of coercive measures within residential facilities for people with disabilities. It criticised laws permitting the detention and forced treatment of people with intellectual or mental disabilities, calling for the abolition of all forms of disability-based deprivation of liberty. 25.7 million DKK was allocated for the period 2025-2028 to support the inclusion of this group in education and the labor market.

- *LGBT+ Rights*

Positive developments: Inclusion of gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics as grounds for protection in hate crime and discrimination laws, and adoption of the concept of "co-fatherhood" in 2025.

Existing concerns: The Committee against Torture and the Civil society organisations are demanding legal recognition of gender identity without age restrictions, and an explicit ban on non-consensual surgical procedures performed on intersex children.

### **Asylum and Immigration**

- *Public Policy and Human Rights Concerns*

Denmark continues to implement a restrictive asylum policy, facing sharp criticism from both U.N. Treaty Bodies and Civil Society Organisations. Several key concerns stand out:

- Processing asylum applications outside Danish territory under agreements with third countries, without sufficient legal safeguards.
- The increasing use of administrative detention for deportation, affecting children and families, contrary to the principle that it should be a last resort.

- Inhumane detention conditions in returnee centers, requiring immediate and fundamental improvement.

- *Community Contribution System*

In 2025, the Danish government introduced a new work commitment system. This system requires specific categories of beneficiaries of cash assistance who entered Denmark from abroad and do not meet certain criteria regarding their length of stay and employment to actively contribute to Danish society for up to 37 hours per week. The system aims to promote the social and economic integration of these groups by linking access to financial support to fulfilling legally defined social responsibilities.

### **The Reality of Human Trafficking in Denmark**

- *Legal and Institutional Framework*

Danish law explicitly criminalises human trafficking and exploitation. Competent authorities are responsible for investigating cases and prosecuting perpetrators. In December 2020, a Special Crime Unit (NSK) was established to enhance the investigation and prosecution of complex and organised cases, including human trafficking.

- *National Action Plan 2022-2025*

The plan focuses on strengthening efforts to support victims of human trafficking in all its forms, considering the needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children. Denmark has allocated 118,2 million DKK to support these efforts, as well as to strengthen the work of government-funded NGOs in combating prostitution and to improve specialised shelters for female victims.

- *Danish Centre Against Human Trafficking (CMM)*

The center plays a pivotal role in identifying and assisting victims of human trafficking, as well as raising awareness and training relevant stakeholders.

- *Key Challenges in Combating Human Trafficking in Denmark*

Denmark faces significant challenges in its efforts to combat human trafficking. The most notable is the low number of investigations and convictions in these cases, according to observations by the Committee against Torture and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, raising questions about the effectiveness of law enforcement. Furthermore, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted a lack of comprehensive data on women and girls who are victims of trafficking, particularly in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, which hinders monitoring and response efforts. The Committee against Torture also criticised the short recovery and reflection periods granted to victims and the inadequacy of the support provided to them. Finally, an increase in online recruitment of victims has been observed, necessitating enhanced awareness and prevention efforts.

### **Greenland and The Faroe Islands — Indigenous Peoples and Territories**

- *Greenland*

U.N. reports indicate high rates of suicide and gender-based violence in Greenland, calling for comprehensive data collection and analysis to address the root causes. Civil Society Organisations demand formal recognition of the colonial legacy, the initiation of a genuine reconciliation process, and the guarantee of culturally sensitive healthcare. Concerns are also growing regarding the impacts

of climate change on the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples and their right to participate in climate adaptation decisions.

Legislative developments: In 2024, Greenland adopted the Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act and launched a specialised clinic to treat perpetrators of sexual offenses against children.

Rights demand: Ensuring the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples in decisions concerning their resources and lands.

#### *- Faroe Islands*

Positive developments: Strengthening the Gender Equality Office, reviewing the Gender Equality Act to adopt a proactive approach to promoting gender equality, and establishing an independent Ombudsman concerned with the rights of people with disabilities. However, some concerns remain unaddressed. Children's access to legal remedies remains limited because the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child has not entered into force yet, thus restricting the ability of children in the Faroe Islands to file complaints. The situation in prisons remains a shared concern between the Faroese and Danish authorities, leading them to agree on the construction of a modern prison to be completed by 2030.

### **Civil Liberties and The Rule of Law**

#### *- Freedom of Expression and Assembly*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that defamation remains a criminal offense in Denmark and recommended its decriminalisation. The Human Rights Committee also requested clarification regarding allegations of arbitrary arrest and fines imposed on participants in peaceful protests.

#### *- Access to Justice*

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities criticised the barriers to their effective access to the justice system and recommended the development of a comprehensive national strategy to ensure such access.

### **Summary**

The Kingdom of Denmark presents a model that combines documented human rights achievements with ongoing challenges requiring serious attention. On the achievement front, Denmark boasts a sophisticated legal framework and well-established institutional mechanisms in the field of human rights. However, there are clear gaps between the legislative text and its effective implementation on the ground. The following challenges require addressing:

- A gap between documented and actual discrimination.
- Detention conditions require fundamental reform.
- An asylum policy that raises serious human rights concerns.
- Addressing the legacy of colonialism in Greenland.

The most prominent achievements include:

- A comprehensive anti-discrimination legal framework.
- Strong reforms to parental leave and gender equality.
- Effective national plans to combat human trafficking and domestic violence.
- Active commitment to international monitoring mechanisms.

## II. Background of Denmark's political and social situation



Denmark is one of the most stable and prosperous democracies in the world, combining an effective democratic political system with a cohesive society based on the principles of welfare and equality.

### **Political Reality**

Denmark has a political system based on a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy, with the parliament (Folketing) elected every four years. Political life is characterised by a multi-party system, and governments are often formed through coalitions between parties because it is difficult for any single party to obtain an absolute majority. The most prominent political parties are the Liberal Party (Venstre), the Social Democrats, and the Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti).

In recent years, Denmark has experienced minority governments and limited coalitions, such as the government of Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats. Danish politics is known for its tradition of dialogue and consensus-building between parties, which promotes political stability.

Denmark faces political challenges such as adapting to global geopolitical changes, including increasing military spending and enhancing resilience to international risks. Denmark also plays an active role in global issues such as climate change, although there is a gap between climate goals and current policies, particularly in the large agricultural sector.

### **Social Reality**

Denmark is characterised by a cohesive society based on a comprehensive welfare model, which provides free education, universal healthcare, and extensive social support. This model aims to reduce social inequalities and promote social cohesion. However, the country faces challenges such as an aging population, which puts pressure on the welfare system and increases the demand for public services.

The integration of immigrants into the labor market is a pressing issue, as many young people of immigrant origin still face difficulties in finding suitable employment or education. Technological developments, such as artificial intelligence, also raise questions about the future of the labor market and the sustainability of the welfare system.

Culturally, Denmark enjoys strong press freedom and media diversity, with major newspapers such as Ekstra Bladet, BT, Berlingske Tidende, and Politiken. Danish society is also known for its openness and tolerance, with religious minorities such as Muslims and Jews alongside the Lutheran majority.

### **Economy and Society**

The Danish economy is primarily based on services, trade, and industry, with a small but efficient agricultural sector. Denmark enjoys a high standard of living and one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, along with low levels of income inequality. However, maintaining a balance between economic growth and the sustainability of the welfare system remains an ongoing challenge.

In conclusion, Denmark represents a model of success in combining political stability and social cohesion, with a strong focus on welfare and sustainability. However, future challenges will require continued innovation and adaptation to maintain this unique model.

### III. Background and Critical Perspective on The Subsisting Issues Across The Second, Third and Fourth UPR Cycles



#### **General Context and Methodological Framework**

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a pivotal mechanism within the UN human rights system, allowing for periodic and systematic assessment of Member States' human rights records. Denmark is among the countries with a respectable international reputation in the field of human rights. However, a careful reading of the outcomes of successive cycles the second (2016), third (2021), and fourth (2026) reveals a worrying pattern: the same recommendations are repeated across successive cycles without tangible progress, raising fundamental questions about the seriousness of compliance.

#### **Chronic Issues Recurring Across Three Cycles**

- *The Legislative Framework for Combating Discrimination: A Deep-Rooted Structural Gap*

Since the second cycle in 2016, numerous countries have called for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation covering all its aspects. For over a decade, this recommendation has been present in various forms at each cycle, from Greece, Mexico, and Ecuador, among others.

During the fourth cycle (2026), the gap between the fragmented legislative framework and the need for a unified, comprehensive law remains unresolved.

The Critical Perspective: Denmark has consistently responded by referring to a set of separate laws covering various aspects of discrimination. However, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted in its fourth cycle documents that the gap between officially recorded cases of discrimination and those documented in opinion polls remains significant, indicating a structural deficiency in the mechanisms for redress.

- *The Policy of “Ghettos” and Then “Parallel Societies”: Changing The Name Without Changing The Substance*

This case represents a stark example of the gap between reformist rhetoric and practical reality. Since the second cycle, several countries—from Spain and Switzerland to Australia, Canada, and France—have observed the discriminatory nature of “ghetto” legislation targeting neighborhoods with a high percentage of “non-Western” residents.

Denmark responded in its report for the fourth cycle (2026) by stating that it had replaced the term “ghetto” with “parallel societies” and “transition zones,” considering this a fundamental reform. However, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was not convinced by this shift, emphasising that the ethnic criterion represented by the percentage of “non-Western” residents remains present in the legislation, resulting in a clear discriminatory effect in the areas of housing, employment, and services.

The Critical Perspective: Changing the terminology while retaining the ethnic criterion in the classification constitutes a superficial reform that merely reproduces the problem in a new guise. It should be noted that CSOs in the fourth cycle particularly Maat Foundation for Peace, Development and Human Rights (MAAT), the Institute of Solidarity for peace and freedom (ISPF), and the Institute of Development for everyone (IDE) described this legislation as effectively leading to the demolition of social housing and the termination of leases, turning residents into "legally homeless."

- *Torture: A Crime Absent from Criminal Law*

From the second to the fourth<sup>h</sup> cycle, the call to criminalise torture as a separate offense in Danish Penal Code was repeatedly made. During the fourth cycle, the Committee against Torture emphasised that the absence of such a provision was not limited to the general criminal code but extended to Military Criminal Law, as well as to the criminal legislation of Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

The Critical Perspective: Denmark's insistence on relying solely on the general provisions of its penal code instead of establishing a separate offense of torture as defined by the Convention against Torture creates a genuine legal loophole. Given the repeated nature of this recommendation over a decade, this stance appears more akin to political resistance than a technical issue.

- *Solitary Confinement: An Incomplete Reform Under Constant Pressure*

This issue is one of the most frequently mentioned in the recommendations of the three cycles. From the second to the fourth cycle, several countries called for the abolition of solitary confinement for juveniles and its reduction for adults. During the fourth cycle, Denmark referred to the reform of its disciplinary sanctions system, which came into effect in 2023 and resulted in a decrease in cases of prolonged solitary confinement.

However, the Committee against Torture expressed its continued concern that solitary confinement is still permitted for up to four weeks in “exceptional circumstances” and is still applied to juveniles.

The Critical Perspective: The reform implemented acknowledges a reduction in the practice, but it leaves its essence intact. Subjecting a child to solitary confinement for seven days is not an acceptable human rights solution, as international standards affirm that solitary confinement for juveniles must be completely prohibited without exception.

- *Refugee and Asylum Seeker Rights: Escalating Restrictions*

Successive (UPR) reviews have reflected growing concern regarding Denmark's refugee policy. In the fourth cycle, three particularly serious issues emerged:

First, the legislation on "transfer of asylum to a third country," which raised concerns from the Committee against Torture and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who called for its review to ensure non-refoulement.

Second, the Committee against Torture expressed concern about the “tolerated stay” regime, which forces individuals to reside in return center and deprives them of the right to work. The committee recommended that Denmark review this regime to guarantee individuals' right to work and freedom to choose their place of residence, thereby ensuring their human dignity and fundamental rights.

Third, plans to establish a prison in a third country to detain foreigners convicted by Danish courts, a move that sparked widespread criticism.

The Critical Perspective: Denmark is moving towards an "externalisation" of human rights responsibility transferring asylum processing and even the enforcement of criminal sentences to other countries in a paradigm shift that reveals a deep tension between domestic electoral politics and international human rights obligations.

- *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW): A Stubborn Rejection and a Weak Justification*

This issue is perhaps the most telling illustration of the structural tensions in the Danish position. From the second to the fourth cycle, more than twenty countries called on Denmark to sign the (ICRMW). At the fourth cycle, Denmark formally confirmed its decision not to sign.

The Critical Perspective: This position reveals a selectivity in the Danish human rights system: a country that tops global indicators of individual rights but is reluctant to accept international protection frameworks for the most vulnerable groups.

**Emerging and In-Depth Issues in The Fourth Cycle (2026)**

- *Historical Injustice in Greenland: From Denial to Partial Recognition*

The Greenland files represent a new dimension, to which the fourth cycle has given exceptional weight:

- “Experiment Children”: In 2020, the Prime Minister of Denmark issued a formal apology to the 22 Greenlandic children who were sent to Denmark in 1951 as part of a social experiment intended to create a group of role models for Greenland's modernisation. However, these children were separated from their families and lost their language, culture, and family ties. The apology acknowledged the lasting harm caused by the experiment. The Danish and Greenlandic governments also agreed on a compensation plan, with each surviving child or their heirs receiving 250,000 DKK in recognition of their suffering. This step reflects an acknowledgment of the historical injustice suffered by these individuals and an attempt to redress the harm inflicted upon them over the decades.
- Forced Contraception Campaign (the so-called “coil campaign”): In 2025, an independent investigation into forced contraception practices that began in the 1960s uncovered testimonies from 354 women, describing 488 incidents. The testimonies showed that the vast majority of women did not believe they had consented to the contraceptive methods they received, nor did they feel they had been adequately informed beforehand. In response, the Greenlandic government launched a separate human rights investigation, expected to be completed by January 2026. In September 2025, the Danish Prime Minister offered a formal apology to the affected women during a visit to Greenland. In December 2025, the Danish government and a broad parliamentary majority reached a political agreement to establish a compensation program for the victims, with the legislation expected to come into effect in June 2026.
- Removal of Inuit Children from Their Families: CSOs called for an independent investigation into these practices.

The Critical Perspective: While the apology and compensation are positive steps, Just Atonement Inc. (JAI) the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), and Maat Foundation for Peace, Development and Human Rights (MAAT) pointed to shortcomings in the scope of compensation and accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, the continued use of "culturally inappropriate" psychological tests in assessing the parental competence of Greenlandic families resulting in children being removed from their families indicates that the structural problem has not yet been addressed.

- *Artificial Intelligence and Facial Recognition: A Worrying Human Rights Perspective*

The fourth cycle addressed, for the first time in a comprehensive manner, the risks that digital technologies pose to human rights. The Danish Institute for Human Rights expressed concern regarding:

- Granting police the authority to use facial recognition without a clear legal basis.
- Expanding the powers of the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) to collect data without prior judicial authorisation.

- *Rights of Persons with Disabilities: A Gap Between Legislation and Implementation*

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, at its fourth cycle, issued several key recommendations, most notably:

- The call to abolish the legal framework that permits the detention and forced treatment of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Concern about the escalation of coercive measures in facilities caring for people with disabilities.
- The denial of the right to vote to those under legal guardianship.

### **Danish Response Patterns**

Denmark's response patterns to recommendations which were demonstrated through UPR, successive cycles the second (2016), third (2021), and fourth (2026) for reforming human rights in Denmark have ranged into three main categories:

The first pattern: genuine compliance: documented in prominent cases, such as criminalising non-consensual sex and classifying it as rape in 2020, reforming parental leave, and abolishing the diagnosis of "gender identity disorder."

The second pattern: formal compliance without real change in reality and substance of practice: replacing terminology without changing mechanisms, such as transforming "ghetto" into "parallel societies," or reducing solitary confinement without abolishing it.

The third pattern: explicit or implicit rejection: such as refusing to sign the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers or insisting on not criminalising torture as a separate offense.

### **Conclusion**

Denmark presents a highly significant model in comparative human rights studies: an advanced welfare state, ranking highly in governance and democracy indices, and pursuing an international development policy that champions human rights. However, a review of its UPR records reveals a gap between international rhetoric and domestic policy, particularly concerning immigration and asylum, racial and religious discrimination, and minority rights.

Even more serious than the shortcomings themselves are the pattern of repetition: when the same recommendation is repeated in three consecutive cycles without any substantial change, this does not necessarily indicate a technical deficiency but rather reflects a lack of political will. In this context, the UPR instead of being a reform mechanism becomes a mirror reflecting the gap between declared commitments and actual policy.

## IV. Exhaustive Summary of Denmark's 4th UPR Cycle



### **Openness of Denmark's Representative to Criticism**

The Danish representative, along with the representatives of Greenland and the Faroe Islands, demonstrated a clear openness to criticism during the review session. Recommendations and observations from Member States were addressed constructively, with an emphasis on the commitment to improving their human rights situation. The representatives actively provided detailed responses to the questions posed, focusing on the initiatives undertaken by Denmark to address existing challenges.

### **Active Representation and Depth of Analysis**

The Danish representatives were very active in providing in-depth analyses of the situation in their country. Achievements such as national action plans to combat racism, promote gender equality, and improve conditions in disadvantaged areas were highlighted. Challenges such as combating hate speech, protecting the rights of minorities, and addressing mental health issues were also acknowledged. The representatives provided detailed responses to the questions, reflecting a willingness to take criticism seriously.

### **Accountability by Member States**

Denmark faced strong scrutiny from Member States, with various issues raised, including racial discrimination, migrant rights, the protection of women and children from violence, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Member States made specific recommendations, such as reviewing housing policies that may lead to discrimination, strengthening the protection of victims of human trafficking, and improving detention conditions. This accountability reflected international concern for improving the human rights situation in Denmark.

### **Issues Discussed Frequently**

- *Racial Discrimination and Hate Speech*

During the interactive dialogue, Denmark affirmed that it has a robust and comprehensive legal framework to combat racism and discrimination. In February 2025, the government launched a National Action Plan against Racism, which includes initiatives in housing, children, youth, nightlife, and the labor market, as well as measures to address racially motivated hate crimes and extremism. The plan also includes specific measures to combat discrimination against Greenlanders residing in Denmark.

Several countries expressed concern about the persistence of racial discrimination and hate speech and offered various recommendations. Turkey called for a separate Action Plan to combat Islamophobia, noting that the current National Action Plan does not mention discrimination against Muslims, despite criticism from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) for this omission. The United Kingdom recommended strengthening the recording and prosecution of hate crimes and extending protection to all religious and ethnic minorities. Belgium, Venezuela, Malta and other countries called for a clear definition of racial discrimination to be included in the Action Plan and for the establishment of a systematic system for collecting disaggregated data. Canada recommended that police commit to recording potential incidents as hate crimes when victims report biased motives. Several countries, including Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Tunisia, called for expanding the scope of the plan to include combating discrimination against all religious and ethnic minorities without exception, including Muslims.

Some countries, such as China, Venezuela, and Belarus, expressed grave concern about what they termed "ghetto laws" or "parallel societies" legislation, arguing that such laws include classifications based on ethnic origin and lead to social stigma and marginalization. Denmark responded that it had replaced the term "ghetto" with alternative terms such as "parallel societies," "areas of transformation," and "vulnerable housing areas," emphasizing that the classification is based on socioeconomic criteria, not ethnic origin.

- *Migrant and Refugee Rights*

The recommendations submitted by the countries focused primarily on several key points. Turkey, Algeria, Ghana, Gambia, Libya, Nigeria, and other countries called on Denmark to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Uruguay expressed concern about the restrictive conditions for family reunification and called for the abolition of mandatory waiting periods for refugees and for the reunification of children aged 15 to 18. Brazil, questioned the legality of return policies to third countries from the perspective of international human rights law and recommended a review of these policies. Germany called for a review of the detention of minors in repatriation centers and for flexible arrangements for long-term residents, expressing concern about conditions in detention centers and the length of detention periods. Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and other countries also called for ensuring that migrants and asylum seekers enjoy the right to effective legal proceedings and access to essential services.

- *Women's Rights*

The Danish legal framework acknowledges that true gender equality has not yet been achieved, despite being considered a fundamental pillar of democracy. The National Action Plan to Combat Intimate Partner Violence (2023-2026), with a budget of €31 million, aims for the early detection of violence and the prosecution of perpetrators. This approach has been strengthened by the adoption of the victim's consent law in defining rape and by Denmark and Greenland's accession to the Istanbul Convention.

At the international level, several countries have called for the adoption of a comprehensive national strategy to combat gender-based violence and the enactment of separate legislation criminalizing femicide. Other countries have urged enhanced legal protections in the digital sphere, ensuring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, establishing a system for collecting data related to gender-based violence, and imposing obligations on employers to combat harassment.

In this context, significant challenges stand out, most notably the persistent gender pay gap and concerns regarding the protection of survivors of violence during custody proceedings, particularly the warning against the misuse of the concept of "parental alienation" in ways that harm the interests of victims and children.

- *Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

Denmark's policy towards people with disabilities is based on four core principles: equal opportunities, solidarity, compensation, and sector accountability. This is reflected in the launch of a National Action Plan for Education and Employment (2025-2028), which includes eight initiatives aimed at integrating 15,000 people with disabilities into the labor market by 2030. At the national level, the Greenland government has introduced a bill to expand financial support for people with disabilities and improve residential care facilities.

International recommendations have included calls to ensure inclusive and quality education for all children with disabilities and to improve teacher training. They have also advocated for the adoption of non-coercive measures in detention, social care, and psychological services, and for aligning the legal definition of torture with the provisions of the Convention against Torture. Several countries have also called for strengthening the protection of people with disabilities from institutional violence, particularly children, and for increased funding for the Equal Treatment Council to address discrimination complaints.

Regarding the challenges, many countries have expressed concern about the continued use of coercive measures in mental health care, while Denmark announced that it had recorded an actual decrease of 10% in these practices between 2021 and 2023, on track towards its goal of reducing them by 30% in 2030.

- *Children's Rights*

Denmark has witnessed a number of legislative developments in the field of children's rights, most notably the modernization of the Danish Children's Act, which ensures full compliance with Denmark's obligations under the UN Convention on Human Rights, and the launch of early intervention projects and the "Family Houses" program, which provides counseling and treatment for victims of abuse. In Greenland, a law was passed in 2023 criminalizing online grooming and defining the sexual enticement of children under the age of fifteen as rape.

At the international level, several countries have called for the adoption of a comprehensive national strategy to prevent violence against children, encompassing all sectors, and for ensuring the separation of children in social care from juvenile offenders in detention facilities. There have also been calls to review child protection procedures to ensure consideration of cultural diversity and to avoid discrimination in decisions to remove children from families with religious or ethnic backgrounds, as well as to strengthen coordination between family courts and social protection services, and to abolish solitary confinement for children in the juvenile justice system.

Denmark acknowledged that its efforts to address school absenteeism and ensure quality education for children with special needs are on the right track. However, the phenomenon of child sexual abuse in Greenland remains a serious challenge that requires sustained protection and treatment measures.

### **State Motivation and Response**

Denmark demonstrated a genuine motivation to improve the human rights situation, providing detailed responses to the recommendations and highlighting ongoing and future initiatives. Criticism was addressed constructively, not passively. Denmark reaffirmed its commitment to cooperating with international human rights mechanisms, including implementing the recommendations made. It should be noted that there are certain issues that Denmark considers red lines and cannot compromise on, particularly concerning asylum seekers and migrants.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Denmark, along with Greenland and the Faroe Islands, demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the human rights situation through legislative and institutional initiatives. However, challenges remain that require further efforts, particularly in the areas of combating discrimination, protecting minority rights, and promoting gender equality. Denmark expressed its willingness to cooperate with the international community to address these challenges.

## V. Recommendations Section

Based on the UPR and observations from international bodies, the following recommendations can be made to strengthen Denmark's efforts to improve the human rights situation in Denmark:

### **Strengthen the Legal and Institutional Framework**

- *Explicitly Criminalise Torture*

Amend the Criminal Code to criminalise torture as a separate offense, in accordance with the Convention against Torture, and ensure independent investigations into all complaints of torture and ill-treatment.

- *Appointing an Independent National Rapporteur*

Establish the position of an Independent National Rapporteur to monitor efforts to combat human trafficking, granting them clear powers to ensure transparency and accountability.

- *Review Immigration Policies*

Amend immigration policies to ensure that victims are not discouraged from reporting crimes for fear of deportation and strengthen the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees.

### **Improving Detention Conditions and Reducing Solitary Confinement**

- *Improving Pretrial Detention Conditions*

Reducing the use of pretrial detention, especially for juveniles, and replacing it with non-custodial measures, while ensuring humane conditions in detention centers.

- *Restricting Solitary Confinement*

Completely prohibiting the use of solitary confinement for children and restricting its use for adults to exceptional measures for limited periods.

- *Independent Oversight*

Establishing an independent and effective oversight mechanism to monitor detention centers and prevent violations.

### **Strengthening the Protection of Women and Children**

- *Enacting a Comprehensive Law to Combat Violence Against Women*

Adopting comprehensive legislation that addresses all forms of violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, while ensuring access to justice, psychological support, and legal aid.

- *National Strategy for Child Protection*

Developing a comprehensive national strategy to protect children from exploitation and violence, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups.

- *Supporting Women Residing with Family-Linked Permits*

Reviewing policies related to residency permits for women at risk of domestic violence and ensuring their independence in obtaining residency and protection.

### **Improving Asylum and Immigration Policies**

- *Reviewing Policies for the External Processing of Asylum Applications*

Ensuring that asylum applications are processed within Danish territory, while improving conditions in detention centers and restricting the detention of children and families.

- *Protecting the Rights of Refugees*

Ensuring that refugees are not returned to their countries of origin if their lives or freedom are at risk, in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement.

### **Strengthening the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Greenland**

- *Recognising the Legacy of Colonialism*

Initiating a path of reconciliation with the Inuit people of Greenland and acknowledging the historical violations they have suffered.

- *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent*

Ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decisions concerning the exploitation of resources and land, in accordance with international human rights standards.

### **Supporting Victims and Promoting Reparations**

- *Strengthening Investigations and Prosecution*

Ensuring thorough investigations and effective prosecution of perpetrators, while providing legal and psychological support to victims.

- *Improving Data Collection*

Establishing a comprehensive system for collecting data on victims of human trafficking, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, to ensure an effective and targeted response.

- *Compensation for Victims*

Facilitating access to compensation for victims from perpetrators or through government funds, ensuring that compensation is comprehensive, including rehabilitation and psychological support.

### **Strengthening International and Domestic Cooperation**

- *Cooperation with Civil Society*

Strengthening partnerships with Civil Society Organisations to provide support to victims and raise public awareness of human trafficking.

- *Implementing International Recommendations*

Committing to implementing the recommendations made by international bodies, including the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

### **Conclusion**

Combating human trafficking in Denmark requires comprehensive and integrated efforts, including strengthening the legal framework, supporting victims, and enhancing international and domestic

cooperation. By implementing these recommendations, Denmark can make tangible progress in protecting vulnerable individuals from the surge of trafficking.

VI. Remarks by the Representatives of Denmark, Greenland, and The Faroe Islands



### **Human Rights Challenges in The Country**

The representative of Denmark emphasised that the country faces ongoing human rights challenges, such as combating racism, achieving effective gender equality, and addressing social disparities in disadvantaged residential areas. Furthermore, she noted the continued need to improve the situation of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and the homeless. In Greenland, challenges such as mental health and suicide were highlighted, while in the Faroe Islands, the need to strengthen social inclusion and combat domestic violence was mentioned.

### **Presentation of The National Report**

- *Denmark*

The report focused on efforts to combat racism, promote gender equality, and improve conditions in disadvantaged residential areas.

- *Greenland*

The report highlighted efforts to strengthen the rights of people with disabilities, protect children's rights, and improve care for the elderly.

- *Faroe Islands*

The report presented efforts to establish human rights institutions, promote gender equality, and combat child poverty.

### **Cooperation With UN Treaty Bodies**

The Danish representative affirmed Denmark's commitment to full cooperation with UN treaty bodies, including the implementation of previous UPR recommendations. She also noted Denmark's support for international initiatives such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

### **Efforts to Improve Human Rights**

- *Denmark*

National action plans to combat racism and promote gender equality were launched, along with reforms to the housing system for the homeless.

- *Greenland*

Strategies were implemented to improve mental health, promote children's rights, and support older people.

- *Faroe Islands*

The institutional framework for human rights was strengthened, social inclusion policies were improved, and efforts to combat domestic violence were undertaken.

### **Responses to Delegates' Comments:**

- *Rights of People with Disabilities*

Denmark reaffirmed its commitment to promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities through a national action plan aiming to employ 15,000 people by 2030.

- *Homelessness*

The reform of the housing system, based on a "housing first" approach to reduce homelessness, was explained.

- *Racism*

The national action plan to combat racism was highlighted, including initiatives to promote social cohesion.

- *Greenland*

Efforts to address mental health and suicide issues, as well as compensation for victims of past abuses, were outlined.

These responses reflect Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands' desire to improve their international image and emphasise their commitment to human rights, focusing on positive initiatives and avoiding acknowledgment of deep-seated challenges or violations.

## VII. Looking Forward : New Priorities of The International Community and Commitments of Denmark

### **Recommendations Accepted by Denmark and Their Implementation**

- *Denmark Accepted Several Recommendations, Leading to Tangible Reforms That Can Be Objectively Documented*

In the area of women's rights and gender equality, in 2020, Denmark passed a law criminalising non-consensual sex and classifying it as rape, responding to repeated recommendations from the second and third cycles. In 2022, it restructured its parental leave system to grant both parents 24 weeks of leave equally. In 2025, it extended compulsory military service to include women on an equal footing with men, a significant reform reflecting its deep commitment to actual, not merely rhetorical, equality.

In the area of LGBT+ rights: Since 2018, Denmark has established successive plans to support LGBT+ rights. In 2021, Denmark introduced explicitly referring to gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics as grounds of protection in the Danish laws covering hate crimes, hate speech and discrimination, and in 2025, Denmark enshrined the concept of "co-fatherhood" for same-sex couples. In 2026, Denmark will co-host the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia with the Council of Europe.

In the area of combating human trafficking: Denmark adopted a National Action Plan for 2022-2025 with an allocation of 118,2 million DKK, established a special crime unit, and strengthened the role of the Danish Centre Against Human Trafficking (CMM).

In the area of enforced disappearances: Denmark ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2022, although Denmark has rejected the individual right of appeal before its committee.

In the area of solitary confinement: Denmark adopted a new disciplinary sanctions regime in 2023, which resulted in a significant decrease in cases of prolonged solitary confinement.

In the area of acknowledging historical injustices in Greenland: In 2020, the Prime Minister apologised for the 1951 child experiment, and in 2025, she issued a formal apology for the forced IUD campaign and established a reparations scheme.

### **Denmark's New Priorities for The Fourth Cycle**

- *In Its Report for The Fourth Cycle, Denmark Introduced Several Priorities That Reflect An Evolution In Its National Human Rights Agenda.*

Combating antisemitism: In 2022, Denmark published a dedicated action plan, followed in 2024 by a parliamentary agreement on twelve additional initiatives, and then in 2025 by the launch of a new plan comprising seventeen initiatives. This rapid pace demonstrates a clear political will when it exists.

Combating racism: In February 2025, Denmark published a national action plan comprising thirty-six initiatives, the first of its kind, with twelve additional initiatives specifically addressing discrimination against Greenlanders.

Protecting women in nightlife: In 2025, Denmark launched a plan of ten initiatives, including the criminalisation of “withdrawing a condom without the partner’s knowledge” “criminalisation of stealing” a proactive measure reflecting a mature social awareness.

Reducing coercion in mental health care: In May 2025, Denmark adopted a political agreement aiming to reduce coercive measures by 30% in 2030, as part of a ten-year plan.

Granting males the right to shelter in crisis homes: In 2024, a legal obligation was introduced to provide shelters for male victims of domestic violence.

### **Remarks Delivered by The Representative of Denmark**

The representative of Denmark, along with a representative from Greenland and the Faroe Islands, made some remarks and presented future projects. However, the Danish representative noted that the Danish government she currently represents is a caretaker government, as a new government is being formed following the elections of March 24th. Therefore, she would only present what has been accomplished and could not propose future projects concerning Denmark. **In this regard, the following points were noted by the representative of Denmark through 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the UPR:**

- An action plan was presented in February 2025 aimed at comprehensively and effectively combating racism in Danish society.
- The Gender Equality Act has been strengthened to include a ban on all forms of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.
- The terminology has been changed so that authorities no longer use the term ghettos, but rather parallel societies, areas of transformation, or vulnerable housing areas. This change reflects a new approach to addressing the challenges associated with disadvantaged residential areas. It entails a greater emphasis on inclusion, integration, and improvement of living conditions.
- A National Action Plan for 2025 has been launched to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in education and the labour market. The goal is to increase employment by 15,000 people with disabilities by 2030.
- The representative from Greenland addressed the rights of persons with disabilities, noting the launch of an action plan to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2024-2034). She also discussed children's rights, highlighting the establishment of a dedicated Ministry for Children, Youth, and Family to ensure coordinated efforts. Finally, she addressed the rights of older people, noting the launch of the " Good Life in Old Age, Freedom, Welfare and Securing the Future " strategy, which focuses on improving healthcare and housing for the elderly.
- The representative from the Faroe Islands addressed the institutional framework, noting the ongoing work to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. She also discussed children's rights, highlighting the strengthening of social policies to increase disposable income for families with children. Finally, she addressed gender equality, noting the review of the Gender Equality Act to include provisions on sexual harassment, efforts to close the gender pay gap, and the promotion of women's representation in society.

These points reflect Denmark's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights throughout its territory, with a focus on inclusion, equality, and social justice.

## **The Prospects for The Continuation of Key Human Rights Issues A Forward-Looking Perspective**

Herein lies the true depth of the Danish human rights situation. There are issues that cannot be described as "under review" ; rather, they are trapped in a political vortex that seems unwilling to find a genuine solution.

### *- Issues with A Low Probability of Resolution in The Foreseeable Future*

On the topic of immigration and asylum policies, the entire Danish political system—right and left—is moving toward greater repression. For a full decade, parties have been vying to adopt a hardline stance on immigration. In this climate, any retreat from the policy of deportation or transferring asylum seekers to third countries appears electorally unlikely. Human rights policy here is subject to the calculations of the ballot box.

When it comes to structural racial discrimination, as long as the "non-Westerner" criteria remains embedded in social and housing legislation, the Commission on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will continue its criticisms, and Denmark will continue to offer defensive responses. A genuine solution requires a fundamental revision of the philosophy of national integration, something that does not appear to be on the horizon in the current political landscape.

As for the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers, Denmark explicitly stated in its report for the fourth cycle that it would not sign this Convention. Denmark justified its refusal by stating that the Migrant Workers Convention does not clearly differentiate between legally and illegally residing workers. Granting social rights to undocumented migrant workers is not an option, as it would undermine the welfare state and encourage further illegal immigration. This constitutes a formal closure of the file, a rare and firm stance within the context of the (UPR).

### **Looking forward to the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle**

Five thematic areas will most likely take center stage in the discussion: artificial intelligence and digital surveillance, the externalisation of human rights obligations through the transfer of asylum and detention to third countries, the situation in Greenland in light of escalating independence talks, violence against women in light of the alarming 2025 statistics, and the rights of persons with disabilities with the heavy recommendations package of the Disability Committee.

### **Challenges That Have Defied Resolution for More than A Decade**

There remain five structural challenges that exceed the capacity of any review cycle to address them: the crisis of national identity in the face of multiculturalism, the chronic gap in racial discrimination that reflects a collapse in institutional trust, the colonial legacy in Greenland that calls for historical reconciliation instead of procedural policies, a reform of the legal guardianship system for people with disabilities, and a rights-based foreign policy model that threatens the entire international asylum system.

### **Conclusion**

Denmark presents a remarkable model in its engagement with the international human rights system, demonstrating serious interaction with mechanisms for following up on recommendations through documented legislative and reform measures. However, some sensitive issues, such as immigration, asylum policies and minority rights, appear to be on a difficult and discouraging path, where

considerations of electoral realities and partisan competition intertwine with the requirements of international commitment. Perhaps the fifth cycle of the UPR offers an opportunity to assess whether the dialogue accumulated over the years has resulted in a genuine shift in policies, or whether it still requires deeper implementation on the ground.

## VIII. A Comprehensive Critical Analysis of Denmark's UPR

### **Shortcomings of the Danish National Report**

Despite its apparent comprehensiveness, the Danish National Report overlooks several crucial issues. The report does not adequately address Denmark's colonial legacy in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, including issues such as forced sterilization and cultural violations. It also fails to explicitly address the right to self-determination of these Peoples. The report does not adequately address the legitimate concerns of some Danes regarding the impact of immigration on cultural and social identity, especially given the increasing number of immigrants and asylum seekers in a small country like Denmark. The report does not mention Denmark's role in addressing the root causes of immigration, such as their lack of support for the stability of the countries of origin and their necessary role in promoting human rights within them, rather than relying on border closure policies.

### **UN Assessment**

The UN assessment, while praising Denmark's efforts in areas such as gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities, lacks in-depth criticism of certain issues. The assessment did not adequately highlight the need for Denmark to offer a formal apology and reparations to Greenland and the Faroe Islands for historical abuses, or to clearly support the right to self-determination. The assessment focused on improving the integration of migrants without addressing Denmark's responsibility to address the root causes of migration, such as war, poverty, and human rights abuses in countries of origin.

### **Civil Society Reports**

Civil society reports were more vocal in their criticism of Danish policies, but they did not adequately address them. The reports did not adequately acknowledge the legitimate concerns of some Danes about the impact of immigration on their cultural and social identity, thus neglecting a necessary dialogue on the balance between openness and the preservation of identity. The reports did not adequately highlight the need to explicitly grant Greenland and the Faroe Islands the right to self-determination, including the option of full independence should the people so desire.

### **Limitations of UPR Mechanism**

The UPR mechanism relies heavily on self-reporting by states, making it vulnerable to manipulation or concealment of facts. Furthermore, UPR recommendations are non-binding, limiting their effectiveness in bringing about real change. States often avoid discussing sensitive issues such as the colonial legacy or historical violations, reducing the comprehensiveness of the review.

### **Self-Reporting and the Necessity of Independent Experts**

Self-reporting relies on the good faith of states, making it susceptible to bias or concealment of facts. Therefore, Independent experts and civil society organisations should be involved in the review process to provide objective assessments. There should be more rigorous international mechanisms to verify information provided by states, especially in sensitive issues such as historical injustices and the rights of indigenous peoples.

### **Legitimate Concerns About Immigration**

Danes have a right to be concerned about the impact of immigration on their cultural and social identity, especially in a small country like Denmark. However, there should be a comprehensive national dialogue on how to balance openness to immigrants with preserving Danish cultural identity. Denmark should promote integration policies that encourage immigrants to learn Danish and participate in the labor market, while combating dependence on government benefits. Instead of focusing solely on closing borders, Denmark should work to address the root causes of migration by supporting development and human rights in countries of origin. Guarantee the return of migrants and asylum seekers to their countries of origin when they become safe and stable, while providing the necessary support for reintegration.

### **Right to Self-Determination for Greenland and The Faroe Islands**

Denmark must offer a formal apology and reparations for historical violations in Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Explicitly grant Greenland and the Faroe Islands the right to self-determination, including the option of full independence if the people so desire.

### **Conclusion**

Denmark's UPR, while important, suffers from fundamental shortcomings in addressing issues such as the colonial legacy, legitimate concerns about migration, and the right to self-determination for Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The UPR mechanism must be strengthened by engaging independent experts and international verification mechanisms, with a focus on addressing the root causes of migration and supporting the right to self-determination for indigenous peoples. Only through such measures can genuine justice and full respect for human rights be achieved.

## IX. GICJ Position

**Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)** acknowledges Denmark's progress in the field of human rights, particularly in areas such as gender equality, the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, combating domestic violence, and adopting national plans to combat racism and discrimination.

However, GICJ also expresses its concern regarding a number of outstanding issues, foremost among them the continued racial discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, especially Muslims and immigrants. GICJ believes that certain terms used in policies and legislation, such as classifying neighborhoods based on ethnic origin, lead to stigmatization and marginalization. This is compounded by deficiencies in detention conditions, particularly regarding solitary confinement, and the weak protection afforded to victims of hate speech and discrimination.

GICJ emphasizes the need for Denmark to take serious steps to address historical and colonial violations in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, including issuing a formal apology and providing fair reparations to the affected populations, while upholding their inalienable right to self-determination.

In concluding its position, GICJ calls on Denmark to build on its achievements by reviewing its discriminatory policies and strengthening accountability mechanisms and the effective implementation of the recommendations issued by (UPR), in order to ensure the protection of the rights of all individuals on an equal footing and without discrimination.

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