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Date: 08/102021

DH-DD(2021)1008

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Meeting: 1419th meeting (December 2021) (DH)

Item reference: Action Report (08/10/2021)

Communication from Georgia concerning the case of IDENTOBA AND OTHERS v. Georgia (Application No. 73235/12)

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Réunion: 1419e réunion (décembre 2021) (DH)

Référence du point : Bilan d'action (08/10/2021)

Communication de la Géorgie concernant l'affaire IDENTOBA ET AUTRES c. Géorgie (requête n° 73235/12) (anglais uniquement)

DH-DD(2021)1008: Communication from Georgia.

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DGI

08/10/2021

SERVICE DE L'EXECUTION DES ARRETS DE LA CEDH



საქართველოს იუსტიციის სამინისტრო MINISTRY OF JUSTICE OF GEORGIA



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№13309

08 / October / 2021

Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

Identoba and Others (Application no. 73235/12, final on 12.08.2015)
97 Members of the Gldani Congregation of Jehovah's witnesses and 4 Others (Application no.71156/01, final on 03.08.2007)
Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze (Application no.7224/11, final on 08.01.2021)

Dear All,

Please, find enclosed the updated action report including the individual and general measures undertaken by the Government of Georgia in the course of the execution of the cases of *Identoba Group*.

Sincerely,

Head of the Department of the State Representation to the International Courts



Nino NIKOLAISHVILI

DH-DD(2021)1008: Communication from Georgia.

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08/10/2021

SERVICE DE L'EXECUTION DES ARRETS DE LA CEDH

The Government of Georgia **Updated Action Report**

Identoba and Others, 73235/12, final on 12.08.2015

97 Members of the Gldani Congregation of Jehovah's witnesses and 4 Others, 71156/01, final on 03.08.2007

Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze, 7224/11, final on 08.01.2021

Introduction

- 1. The cases of the *Identoba Group* concern the failure of the Georgian authorities to provide adequate protection against inhuman and degrading treatment inflicted by private individuals to LGBT activists (in May 2012) and Jehovah's witnesses (in 1999-2001), who were attacked during marches/meetings as well as the absence of any effective investigation in that respect. According to the Final Resolution CM/ResDH(2020)200 the examination of the cases Begheluri and others and Tsartsidze and others were closed.¹
- 2. In previous action plans/reports (dated: 15 November 2016, 2 31 March 2017, 3 16 April 2018, 4 10 July 2019, 5 25 June 20206) the Government of Georgia presented the consolidated information regarding the individual and general measures including the payment of the just satisfaction to all applicants who have submitted the necessary bank details, as well as the information on conducted investigative activities and established factual circumstances in regards to the above-cited cases.
- 3. As the Committee is well-aware, Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia 7224/11 (Judgment 8.10.2020) was added to this group since the Court found that there had been violation of Article 3 under its procedural limb taken in conjunction with Article 14 of the Convention and violation of Article 3 under its substantive limb taken in conjunction with Article 14 of the Convention. The case concerned a police raid on the office of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisation in Tbilisi. The applicants, who worked at the organisation, complained that the police had insulted and threatened them, and put them through humiliating strip-searches. The Court found that the State had been responsible for the homophobic and/or transphobic police abuse that had been inflicted on the applicants and the absence of an effective investigation into the officers' grossly inappropriate behaviour.

¹ Available at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016809fc5ae

² Available at: https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#{%22EXECIdentifier%22:[%22DH-DD(2016)1261E%22]}

³ Available at: https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#{%22EXECIdentifier%22:[%22DH-DD(2017)413E%22]}

⁴ Available at: https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#{%22EXECIdentifier%22:[%22DH-DD(2018)425E%22]}

⁵ Available at: https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#{%22EXECIdentifier%22:[%22DH-DD(2019)795E%22]}

⁶ Available at: https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#{%22EXECIdentifier%22:[%22DH-DD(2020)572E%22]}

Individual measures - Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze

a. Details of just satisfaction

Name and application number	Non-Pecuniary damage	Costs and expenses	Total
Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia $\mathbf{n}^{\circ} \mathbf{7224/11}$	2 000 EUR each		4 000 EUR Paid on: 18.03.2021

b. Other individual measures

- 4. Within the renewed investigation, the applicants were recognized as victims on 23 January, 2021, the rights were introduced to them and they were re-examined. Furthermore, other 10 witnesses of this case (M.K, E.T, S.S, N.Ch, T.V, Kh.Ch, N.Kh, T.G, A.M, M.G.) were recognized as victims, who were questioned as well during the period from February 2021 to July 2021. The witnesses confirmed that they had been subjected to psychological pressure, verbal abuse and inhuman treatment by police officers during a search in the office of Fund "Inclusive" on 15 December 2009. According to the information provided by the Prosecutor's Office, it is impossible to determine the demographic data of all police officers involved in the search, except the ones who drafted and signed the search report. The victims are not able to identify the police officers as well. Furthermore, due to the fact that a long time has passed since the above-mentioned incidents, the identification process of all involved police officers became more difficult, as some of them has changed their workplace or left the country.
- 5. Besides, some of the witnesses in this case are currently outside the country. At this stage their location and contact information is being determined in order to interview the witnesses who had never been interviewed and re-examine the witnesses, who had been already interviewed in order to provide complete information. The issue of granting them the victim status will be further resolved.
- 6. Thus, the investigation is currently ongoing and the Committee will be updated in due course.
- 7. As it was already mentioned in the paragraph 2, the Government of Georgia presented the consolidated information in a comprehensive action report⁷ regarding the individual and

⁷ Available at: https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#{%22EXECIdentifier%22:[%22DH-DD(2020)572E%22]}

general measures including the payment of the just satisfaction to all applicants who have submitted the necessary bank details, as well as the conducted investigative activities and established circumstances in regards to the other cases of this group.

General measures

Investigation/prosecution of discrimination cases

- 8. From the outset, the Government reiterate that fighting against hate crimes presents one of the main priorities which constitutes an ongoing process.
- 9. It is noteworthy that in its decision of 29 September 1 October 2020⁸ the Committee of Ministers noted with satisfaction the statistics indicating that in 2018-2019 there was a significant increase of hate crime investigations, prosecutions and convictions. The Government emphasize that the mentioned statistical data presents a tangible result of active measures taken in the course of fight against discrimination and hereby update the Committee in this regard.
- 10. In particular, pursuant to the decree of the Prosecutor General of Georgia, specialized prosecutors, who completed the training course with the support of the Council of Europe, have been providing procedural guidance over crimes motivated by intolerance since September 1, 2020.⁹
- 11. As a result of the steps taken by the Prosecution Service of Georgia the quality and effectiveness of measures carried out by specialized prosecutors to identify intolerance as the motive in criminal cases has been increased in recent years.
- 12. Moreover, on 23 September 2020, with the support of the Council of Europe and active engagement of the Supreme Court of Georgia, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia ("MIA"), National Statistics Office of Georgia and Prosecutor's Office of Georgia cooperation memorandum was signed on collection of data and publishing a joint report on hate crime. The memorandum provides for maintaining hate crime statistics in compliance with international standards, creating a joint, complete, accurate and transparent database, and proactive publishing by the Prosecutor's Office, MIA and Supreme Court starting from 2021. These authorities proactively published the statistical report for the period from 1 October 2020, through December, 2020, under a pilot programme and any interested party was allowed to familiarize themselves with unified and segregated data of hate crime. The support of the period from 1 October 2020, through December, 2020, under a pilot programme and any interested party was allowed to familiarize themselves with unified and segregated data of hate crime.
- 13. In this connection, the common methodology of statistics on hate crime was presented on March 18, 2021. The representatives of the Council of Europe Tbilisi Office, Government agencies, international and local non-governmental organizations took part in the online meeting.

⁸ Available at: http://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=CM/Del/Dec(2020)1383/H46-5E

⁹ Available at: https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf p. 42

¹⁰ Available at: https://www.geostat.ge/en/single-news/1941/memorandum-of-cooperation

¹¹ Available at: https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf
p. 44

p. 44

12 Available at: https://www.geostat.ge/media/36779/diskriminaciis-nishnit 2020 IV.pdf

- 14. It should be emphasized that in **2016-2020**, criminal **prosecution** was commenced against 646 individuals in total for crimes motivated by intolerance; ¹³ In particular, in 2016 against 44 persons, in 2017 44 persons, in 2018 151 persons, in 2019 183 persons, in **2020** 224 persons. In 2020, criminal prosecution was launched against 178 persons on the grounds of gender hate crime; 11 persons gender identity hate crime; 11 persons sexual orientation hate crime; 7 persons disability hate crime; 4 persons religious hate crime; 3 persons racial hate crime; 2 persons age hate crime; 2 persons ethnicity hate crime; 1 person political beliefs-motivated hate crime; 1 person gender and ethnicity hate crime; 4 persons other grounds. ¹⁴
- 15. Furthermore, in **2020**, 236 individuals and 4 legal entities were recognized as **victims** of crimes motivated by intolerance. Among them, 184 persons were recognized as victims of gender-bias crime, 15 as victims of sexual orientation hate crime, 13 as victims of gender identity hate crime, 10 as victims of religious hate crime, 7 as victims of disability hate crime, 2 as victims of ethnicity hate crime, 2 as victims of age hate crime, 1 as a victim of political beliefs-motivated hate crime, 3 as victims of other hate crimes, 1 as a victim of gender and ethnicity hate crime. ¹⁵
- 16. According to the recent data provided by the Prosecutor's Office, in **6 months of 2021** the criminal prosecution was launched **against 326 persons** on the ground of intolerance, victim status was granted to 330 individuals and 1 legal entity.
- 17. The Government would like to emphasize the progress of the criminal prosecution via referring to the respective data concerning crimes motivated by the **religious intolerance**. In particular, in 2016-2020 the victim status was granted to 90 persons on the grounds of religious hate crime, including 7 legal entities. The statistics of 6 months of 2021 shows that criminal prosecution has been launched against 3 persons and 3 individuals were granted the victim status of the crimes motivated by religious intolerance. Furthermore, criminal prosecution was launched against 2 individuals for the crime motivated by religious and gender intolerance.
- 18. In 2021 a joint meeting was organized by the Prosecutor General's Office of Georgia with the support of the Council of Europe for the prosecutors and judges specialized in crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination and intolerance. The participants of the meeting discussed the tendencies, achievements and challenges in respect of the fight against crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination. Particular attention was drawn to the importance of joint workshop of judges and prosecutors, in order to share their views which will promote and establish a similar standard of practice in the future, to set common approach, which will significantly improve the effectiveness of fight against crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination.
- 19. As for the number of verdicts rendered in the cases of hate crimes, in 2020, the district (city) courts of Georgia delivered **verdicts** against 103 persons. Out of this: 97 persons were convicted; 6 persons were acquitted.

 $^{^{13} \} Available \ at: \ \underline{https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf} \\ p. \ 43$

¹⁴ Available at: https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf p.42

¹⁵ Available at: https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf
p. 43

- 20. Out of the cases in which the courts delivered a verdict, paragraph 1 of Article 53¹ of the Criminal Code was applied as an aggravating circumstance in 88 cases 5 cases related to intolerance on the grounds of gender identity, 5 cases sexual orientation, 2 cases related to intolerance on the basis of gender, 1 case religious intolerance towards a family member, 1 case intolerance on the basis of nationality towards a family member, 32 commission of a crime by one family member against another member of the family, 37 cases gender intolerance in case of domestic crime/domestic violence, 5 cases intolerance on the grounds of sex in domestic crime/domestic violence.
- 21. As for the **Ministry of Internal Affairs**, the Government have already emphasized in their action report of 25 June 2020¹⁶ that the establishment of the Human Rights Department at the MIA in January 2018 to investigate offences motivated by discrimination and intolerance was noted with satisfaction by the Committee of Ministers in their decision of June 2018. The Government reiterate that, the ECRI also considers the creation of this Department as a very positive step.¹⁷
- 22. The Committee is well-aware that since 2019 the mandate of the Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department has been extended and now it assures the effectiveness of investigation of the crimes committed against health and life. One of the main purposes of the mentioned Department is a timely response to the offences, committed, among others, on the grounds of discrimination and intolerance, as well as ensuring the effectiveness of the ongoing investigations which was further noted with interest in decision of 29 September 1 October 2020. ¹⁸
- 23. Hereby the Government update the Committee that in 2020, the Department monitored more than 900 criminal cases that allegedly contained a discriminatory motive for committing a crime. More than 600 criminal cases were monitored, in which the possible crime of intolerance on the grounds of gender was revealed, and more than 250 cases, in which the crime of intolerance on the other grounds of intolerance was revealed.
- 24. As for the information requested by the Committee on the outcome of investigations which were launched into the events of the LGBTI pride march in Tbilisi in June 2019, according to the information provided by the MIA, 1 individual was arrested on June 20, 2019 and was charged under article 239 (Hooliganism) of the Criminal Code. The victim status was granted to 2 individuals. Besides, the discrimination was identified as a motive for committing a crime, within the investigation in question. On August 13, 2019 the Tbilisi City Court convicted N.CH. of hooliganism and was sentenced to one year imprisonment, later it was counted as a conditional sentence and the court determined 1 year probation for the convicted person. In addition, as for the fact of threat, 3 individuals were granted the victim status. The investigation in other episodes is currently ongoing.

Trainings

25. The Government reiterate that increasing the qualification of the law-enforcement authorities and of the staff of the national courts in the field of discrimination is an ongoing process.

¹⁶ Available at: http://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=DH-DD(2020)572E

¹⁷ Available at: https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/1680934a7e, p.5

¹⁸ Available at: http://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=CM/Del/Dec(2020)1383/H46-5E

- 26. In the decision of 29 September 1 October 2020¹⁹ the Committee welcomed and encouraged the authorities to pursue their sustained efforts to provide training to investigators, prosecutors and judges in the area of hate crime, including drawing on the Council of Europe's HELP programme.
- 27. As for the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, the Government update the Committee that in 2020 3 training courses specialized in hate crimes were conducted, with 46 prosecutors participating. Furthermore, 15 representatives of the Service of Witness and Victim Coordinator completed a specialization training course on the topic of crimes motivated by intolerance.
- 28. With the support of the Council of Europe, a HELP training course "Fighting against Hate Crimes" was organized for representatives of the Prosecutor's Office, MIA and the judiciary. The course aimed to improve the skills of prosecutors, judges and investigators to respond more effectively to the crime, to identify hate motive, to carry out criminal prosecution and to render a judgment. The training incorporated 3 phases: investigation of hate crimes, criminal prosecution and rendering court decisions. Fifteen specialized prosecutors completed the course.²⁰
- 29. Moreover, 2 training courses on the topic of "Practical Aspects of Hate-Motivated Crimes and Significance of Identifying Hate Motive in Criminal Cases" were carried out within the scope of mutual cooperation between the Prosecutor's Office and Equality Movement. 39 prosecutors/middle level managers participated in the training course.²¹
- 30. With the support of the joint project of the European Union and the Council of Europe, a series of workshops were organized on the topic of "Improving Evidence, Information and Statistical Data to Perceive and Respond to Discrimination, Hate Speech and Hate Crime". 5 workshops were held in total, involving 6 prosecutors. ²²
- 31. Moreover, 3 remote training courses were held for interns on the topic of the European Standards of prohibition of discrimination, engaging 37 interns. With the support of the UNDP, two remote training sessions were held for witness and victim coordinators on the topic of discrimination and violence. The training was joint and witness and victim coordinators from the MIA participated along with 18 representatives of the Witness and Victim Coordinator of the Prosecutor's Office. ²³
- 32. According to the information provided by the Prosecutor's Office, in 2021 five training activities took place on hate crime issues and 63 employees of the Prosecutor's Office participated in these trainings.
- 33. Moreover, 2 joint trainings were conducted with collaboration of the Prosecutor's Office and the UN Women and Women's Initiative Supporting Group. The training aimed to provide additional information to the specialized prosecutors and investigators on the issues connected to hate crime; the training covered topics like sexual orientation, gender

¹⁹ Available at: http://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=CM/Del/Dec(2020)1383/H46-5E

²⁰ Available at: https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf p.52

 $[\]frac{p.52}{^{21}} \ Available \ at: \ \underline{https://pog.gov.ge/uploads/746d8d16-Annual-Report-of-the-General-Prosecutor-compressed-1.pdf} \\ p.53$

²² *Ibid*.

²³ *Ibid*.

- identity, legal aspects of implementing the freedom of expression and special needs of LGBTQI community; 31 employees were trained within these 2 trainings.
- 34. With the support provided by the Council of Europe and HELP training course "Hate Crimes and hate speech" was implemented in September 2021 for prosecutors, judges and investigators, who will take joint training course on effective response to hate crimes during 3 months.
- 35. The Government would like to note that the above-mentioned training courses and HELP training courses gave rise to the increased rate of criminal prosecutions in recent years. Training courses and the process of further qualification of specialized professionals will be actively continued in the future.
- 36. As to the MIA, as the committee was informed in the previous action report, the Ministry was planning to conduct cascading trainings by the active cooperation with the Council of Europe. The Government emphasize that on the basis of the combination of training modules developed by the Council of Europe and the ODIHR on the issues of identifying and carrying out effective investigations into hate crimes, the cascading trainings began on 31 January 2020 for the staff of the MIA. Psychologists of the Academy of the Ministry and representatives of local non-governmental organizations are involved in the training process. In 2021, 7 training courses took place in Tbilisi and 123 employees of different territorial organs of the Ministry were trained.
- 37. The training module covers important issues such as: hate crime and related concepts, stereotypes in the society, national and international standards for fighting against hate crime, NGOs' services for LGBT + community, difficulties of identification of hate crime, motivation indicators, the process of initial response and investigation of hate crime. Participants are provided with relevant recommendations developed by the Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department.
- 38. In addition, the series of trainings were launched with cooperation between the Ministry of the Internal Affairs and the Council of Europe on 13 July 2020 with respect of elimination of discrimination and effective investigation of crimes committed on the grounds of hate speech and specific signs of discrimination. This training consists of practical and theoretical components and covers the issues like forms of discrimination, hate speech, crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination, indicators of intolerance, national and international standards of investigation, discrimination against women, and on any grounds like race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political or other opinion. 28 staff members of the MIA were trained during this course of trainings in 2020 and 20 were trained in 2021.
- 39. On 11-12 June 2020, 6 coordinators of Witness and Victim Coordinators Service were trained MIA within the project "Human rights for all", which was carried out by the initiative of the "Women's Initiatives Supporting Group" with the support of the European Union and the UNDP. Remote training course covered issues like violence and discrimination on the grounds of sex and gender, mostly vulnerable groups, stigmas and stereotype, discrimination and relevant terminology, myths and stereotypes about the LGBT+ persons, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, hate crime, etc.
- 40. On 22-24 July, 2020 Witness and Victim Service coordinators participated in working group about LGBTQ I+ rights organized by the "Equality Movement". The working group

covered the topics like homophobic/transphobic bullying, duties of social worker and witness and victim coordinators throughout the work with LGBT+ community, the importance of the multidisciplinary team and the principle of work, homophobic/transphobic and domestic violence, LGBT+ community needs and relevant competences for working with them.

- 41. Furthermore, on 19 and 29 September, 2020, 35 employees of Tbilisi Police Department were trained online by the Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department on identification hate crimes and investigation standards.
- 42. It should be emphasized, that the Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department exerts much effort to raise awareness on elimination of all forms of discrimination and hate crime. Particularly, the informative brochure and video were adopted in cooperation with the Council of Europe Office in Georgia, aiming to inform society about the negative effects of hate crime, also about mechanisms of the relevant response to these crimes. The mentioned informative materials were placed in the police offices and social network.
- 43. In addition, on 9-16 November, 2020 the Council of Europe Office in Georgia together with partners organised the second Equality Week. Online events included training on identifying and investigating hate crimes run by the MIA. An online training course on "Equality week for school students" was implemented together with the Ministry of Justice, where students were introduced to the antidiscrimination law and the international practice of human rights protection.²⁴
- 44. Furthermore, according to the information provided by the MIA, in February and April 2021, 20 employees of the police department of Samstkhe-Javakheti region and 70 employees of police department of Autonomous republic of Adjara were trained on investigative methods regarding domestic violence, violence against women, sexual violence issues. The online course also covered legal aspects of fighting against crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance motivated by discrimination.
- 45. The project "Strengthening the local community for gender equality" was organized by "Network of centres for civic engagement" with support of the UN WOMEN and UNFPA; 60 employees from different territorial organs were trained on gender-bias and domestic violence issues on April 27 and 29, 2021.
- 46. Within the EU project "Supporting Fight Against Organized Crime in Georgia" 25 managers from the Ministry on Internal Affairs were trained on gender equality issues. The training was led by the experts of the EU and the representatives of Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department on June 4-5, 2021.
- 47. The training "Crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance" which was organized in the course of the project "Fighting against discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech in Georgia" by the European Council and covered the legal and psychological aspects of crimes committed on the grounds discrimination was attended by 20 representatives of structural and territorial organs of the MIA, on June 5-6, 2021.

²⁴ Available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/-/the-second-equality-week-took-place-in-georgia

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- 48. In June 2021 the employees of the MIA attended the training course organized by the OHCHR in Georgia; the course aimed to deepen the 40 participants' knowledge about the crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination and about discrimination in general.
- 49. Furthermore, in July 2021 the European Council held the workshop on the best practices of investigating crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance for the professionals of the MIA and the Prosecutor's Office. The participants discussed the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights in order to share the knowledge and challenges of investigation on this type of crimes; the meeting covered topics such as discrimination, stereotypes, the importance of effective fight against crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination and intolerance, recommendations and international practice.
- 50. Another important meeting was held in March 2021 between the representatives of the Ombudsmen's office of Georgia and Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department. The discussion referred to the execution of recommendations of the Public Defender's Council of Religions. Representatives of the Council noted with satisfaction that aforementioned recommendations were successfully implemented by the MIA.
- 51. All the above-mentioned activities aim to raise awareness and promote effectiveness of fight against discrimination. The tangible results of the aforementioned activities are the increased statistics with respect to identification of motives of discrimination and criminal proceedings proving effective practical implementation of theoretical knowledge acquired at various trainings/programs.

Conclusion

- 52. To sum up, the Government continue to strengthen their efforts to combat discrimination/intolerance on religious/sexual and any other grounds through effective implementation of respective legislation/national policy and effective investigations.
- 53. The Government hold the view that the aforementioned measures implemented at domestic level will remedy the consequences of the violations of the Convention, as well as they will contribute to further prevention of the violations similar to those identified by the Court.