
UN Human Rights Council
UPR Working Group 43rd Session, 9 May 2023

Israel

Adv. Aweke Kobe Zena
Coordinator of the National Anti-Racism Unit at the Ministry of Justice

Thank you Mr. President.

I am Adv. Aweke Kobe Zena, and I am the Coordinator of the National Anti-Racism Unit at the Ministry of Justice.

In Israel's previous UPR, I shared information on the background of the Unit's establishment in 2017 and its initial steps. Today I would like to present the progress we have made since then.

The National Anti-Racism Unit is in charge of supervising the implementation of an inter-ministerial team's recommendations, including: receiving complaints concerning discrimination and racism, coordinating the handling of these complaints, writing an annual report and examining proposed legislation.

The Unit deals with racism in public spaces and public institutions - Institutional racism and racist behavior by public authorities, including law enforcement authorities.

The Unit works to eradicate racism against all individuals in Israel, regardless of their skin color, country of origin, nationality, or religion.

Hereinafter are three of the Unit's main goals:

The first, is to receive complaints regarding racism, particularly within governmental authorities, and to coordinate the handling of these complaints by the appropriate authorized entities.

The second goal is to advance changes in legislation and policy promoting the eradication and prevention of discrimination and racism in the long term.

The third goal is training regarding racism and its prevention – The anti-racism unit is in charge of training, supporting and overseeing the work of 72 anti-racism officers in Government Ministries and auxiliary units.

In addition to these main goals, in 2020, the Unit established a designated forum, together with NGO's in order to strengthen cooperation on combatting discrimination and racism on the ground.

In regard to cooperation in the field of education:

We perceive antiracism education as a strategic goal, and for this reason we have focused much of our efforts in working with the Ministry of Education to incorporate antiracism education in the education system and particularly in training of teachers.

Back in 2018, we requested that the council for higher education include antiracism education as a mandatory component of teacher training, and we are happy to inform that it has indeed been included in the new guidelines for teacher training in Israel.

In 2022, we expanded the co-operation with the Ministry of Education, through the establishment of a committee called "**the Shared Living Committee**", which included over 200 members, including civil society representatives, academics, teachers and employees of the Ministry of Education.

The Anti-Racism Unit played a significant role in setting up the committee. The Committee's recommendations include 26 practical recommendations for the education system. Last November, a Director-General's circular was issued to implement them in the education system.

In the time I have left I will share key figures on files opened in the Anti-Racism Unit in 2022:

32% of the complainants are from the Arab Population.

17% of the complainants are from Israelis of Ethiopian descent.

18% are immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

5% are from the Sephardic Jewish population.

And 5% are from the ultra-Orthodox population.

To make the Unit's services more accessible to the public, last year we carried out an online campaign in Hebrew and in Arabic.

Mr. President,

To conclude, Israel faces many challenges in the fight against discrimination, racism and ethnically motivated violence. **The State of Israel, and of course, my staff and I,** are committed to confronting these challenges in order to advance human rights and make Israel a better society for everyone.

There are two foundational needs in order for us to achieve these goals: formal authorities, and proper funding. We are hopeful that given these tools, we will be able to move the country forward in its efforts to eradicate and prevent racism and discrimination.

Finally, fighting racism requires a global response, therefore international cooperation is key. We stretch our hand to cooperate and coordinate efforts with the international community on this crucial issue.

Thank you very much.