



UN Committee Against Torture

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by e-mail to: ohchr-cat@un.org

Reference Follow-up procedure - CAT

Issue Finland – 8th periodic report – NHRI submission for follow up

This document contains observations by the Finnish Human Rights Centre (HRC¹, NHRI) to the Committee against Torture for the consideration of the follow-up report by Finland in 2025.

The submission concentrates on two topics, namely asylum and non-refoulement (paragraph 19 (a)) and hate crimes (paragraph 39 (a)). Additional observations are included on the remaining recommendations, reflecting the Government's report.

Reference is made to the earlier submission made for the List of Issues Prior to Reporting, submitted to the Committee in 2019 and submission made for the 79th session in 2024.

Should you have any further questions or need for additional information, do not hesitate to contact us at info@humanrightscentre.fi.

The document may be published online.

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¹ The Human Rights Centre (est. 2012) represents the Finnish National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in international NHRI cooperation and other international and European cooperation in human rights.

The NHRI comprises the Human Rights Centre, its pluralistic 39-member Human Rights Delegation, and the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The institution complies with the UN Paris Principles and the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI) has accredited it with A-status in 2014, 2019 and 2025.

UN CAT- Committee (follow-up of the recommendations from the 79th session)

Submission by the Finnish Human Rights Centre/National Human Rights Institution for the Consideration of the Follow-up Report of Finland

INDEX

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 19 (a) of the concluding observations - Asylum and non-refoulement.....	2
Act on Temporary Measures to Prevent Instrumentalised Migration (482/2024).....	2
Closure of the eastern border.....	3
Aliens Act.....	4
Training of border guards.....	4
Trafficking in human beings.....	5
Follow-up information relating to paragraph 39 (a) of the concluding observations - Hate crimes ...	5
Hate crime statistics.....	5
Hate speech on social media.....	6
Government action plan to combat racism.....	6
Other topics.....	7
Violence against women.....	7
Anti-gender phenomenon and hate speech against women and LGBTIQ+ persons.....	7
Hate speech and discrimination of the Sami.....	8
Antisemitism and islamophobia.....	9
EU Commission infringement proceedings.....	9

Information on the paragraphs under the follow-up procedure

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 19 (a) of the concluding observations - Asylum and non-refoulement

(a) Introduce adequate legal and procedural safeguards to ensure that all asylum-seekers and other persons in need of international protection arriving at the State party's eastern land border, regardless of their legal status and mode of arrival, have access to fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures and non-refoulement determinations;

Act on Temporary Measures to Prevent Instrumentalised Migration (482/2024)

1. As mentioned by the Government in its follow-up report, the Finnish Parliament did pass a law titled *Act on Temporary Measures to Prevent Instrumentalised Migration* (482/2024) in the spring of 2024. The purpose of the law is to counter pressure directed at Finland in the form of instrumentalised migration at the border and to strengthen border security. This law has been heavily criticized by domestic and international human rights actors and bodies.

2. According to the law, under certain conditions, the Finnish Government in plenary session may decide to restrict the reception of applications for international protection in a limited area along Finland's national border and its immediate vicinity. In practice, this would apply to Finland's 1,300-kilometre-long border with Russia. Entry into the country by individuals used as instruments of influence would be denied, they would be removed from the country and directed to a location where applications for international protection are accepted. In practice this would be the Helsinki-Vantaa international airport.
3. The preparatory documents for the law acknowledge that the regulation conflicts with Finland's international human rights obligations and EU legislation. It is also problematic from the perspective of the Constitution. The regulation is seen as interfering with the right to apply for asylum, limiting access to legal remedies and judicial protection, and posing a risk that the absolute prohibition of refoulement and related rights to life, personal liberty, and integrity may not be guaranteed in all situations.
4. Furthermore, the preparatory documents state that the law may lead to violations of the prohibition of collective expulsion and it is also problematic in terms of equality. Nevertheless, the law was adopted, without regard to the criticism.
5. The fact that the law does not provide effective or any legal remedies for individuals whose entry into the country and ability to submit an asylum application are denied, is problematic. As it is, the usual procedural safeguards that are part of the Finnish legal system do not need to be followed.
6. Another concern is the legal protection of border guards who are responsible for implementing the law and risking acting against their duty as civil servants to uphold the constitution and fundamental and human rights.
7. Despite these issues, the law was adopted and remained in force for one year. In spring 2025, the law was renewed and its validity extended until the end of 2026.²
8. However, as stressed by the Government, the law has not been activated. Were it activated, according to various statements and reports by the Government, a migrant who has already entered the country would be removed from the country without delay and instructed to travel to a place where applications for international protection are being received.

Closure of the eastern border

9. Currently, the eastern land and sea borders remain closed to all traffic until further notice. This is done by a Government decision based on Section 16 of

² <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/finland-s-eastern-border-to-remain-closed-until-further-notice-1>

the *Boarder Guard Act* and the information and assessment of the situation at the border, as stated in a related memorandum³ by the Ministry of the Interior.

10. The effects of the Government decision in practice are the same as if the *Act on Temporary Measures to Prevent Instrumentalised Migration* were activated. At the time of preparing the Act in 2023 the reasoning for it was that the border could be opened for regular traffic when the temporary measures could be used against instrumentalized migration. While renewing the border closure in 2025, this re-opening option was not even mentioned.
11. In addition to the difficulties encountered by asylum seekers at the closed borders, there are also other people, whose lives are severely interrupted by the border closure.
12. Currently there is a case against Finland pending before the European Court of Human Rights, *D. and others against Finland* (Application no. 16398/24⁴, communicated to the Government on 12 March 2025). The case concerns effects of the full closure of the border to the lives of the nine applicants, who are Finnish nationals or residents of Finland. They are of Russian origin and belong to Finland's recognised Russian-speaking minority. They claim, among others, violation of their family life, religious rights, right to property as well as discrimination as they are unable to cross the border for work, family relations or other pressing reasons, except via Estonia or other countries who have not closed their borders.
13. The Government submission on this paragraph does not present any information on legal or procedural safeguards, as requested by the Committee. It does not mention the closure of the border based on Border Guard Act or its effects, mainly the inability to seek asylum or even enter the country.
14. It is unclear, how the current situation at the eastern border (full closure by a Government Decision) differs from the situation where the Act on Temporary Measures were activated from the viewpoint of the persons arriving at the border seeking asylum or the border guards on duty.

Aliens Act

15. Additionally, the changes to the *Aliens Act* on the faster enforcement of deportation decisions in asylum matters, among others, was adopted on 23 May 2025 and the new Articles entered into force on 1 June 2025. This rather limits the legal safeguards instead of ensuring their availability.

Training of border guards

16. Furthermore, the Government's reference to training of 200 border guards is rather uninformative. The Border Guard's personnel amounts to around 3.000, out of which some 1.700 are on active duty on the sea and land borders. Additionally, there are Frontex border guards from multitude of states as

³ <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/delegate/file/154446> (in Finnish)

⁴ [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22appno%22:\[%2216398/24%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22appno%22:[%2216398/24%22]})

reinforcements working together with domestic border guards on the eastern border. There is no information on their training.

Trafficking in human beings

17. The closing of the eastern border crossings has also effects on identifying and investigating cases of human trafficking. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) published its latest report on Finland in 2024. Among the concerns were the authorities' insufficient ability to recognise the trafficking victims and the need to improve multi-agency approach to the identification and sharing of information. Additionally, the lengthy national proceedings are problematic.
18. Similar recommendations on the need to improve recognition and support and treatment of trafficking victims have been voiced by the Council of Europe's GREVIO – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, UN CEDAW-committee and in the UPR-process.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 39 (a) of the concluding observations - Hate crimes

- (a) **Encourage the reporting of hate crimes, and ensure that hate crimes are thoroughly investigated, perpetrators prosecuted and punished, and victims provided with effective remedies;**

19. The Government reply to the recommendation does not provide information on the topics of the recommendation.
20. Hate speech and hate related crimes as well as anti-gender phenomenon and actions stemming from it, are increasingly common in Finland.
21. The fact that hate speech has become more frequent in politics and media, has been recognized by all the international monitoring committees in their observations. The current political climate supports it. However, the response to hate speech and hate crimes remains inadequate.

Hate crime statistics

22. According to the latest annual report on hate crimes, prepared by the Police University College of Finland⁵, there were a total of 1,606 reports of suspected hate crimes to the police in 2023. This is 29 percent more than in 2022. The majority (1092, 68%) of the reports were related to suspected crimes, the motive of which, based on the information in the original report of the crime, was related to the ethnic or national background of the victim. The police classified only 44 percent of these incidents as hate crimes.

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https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/866764/Polamk_katsauksia_38.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (abstract in English on page 8)

23. The most common types of crimes were assaults in public places, slander, threats and harassment. Those holding a citizenship of Somalia experienced the highest frequency of crimes motivated by ethnic or national origin. From all the reports of offences based on ethnic or national origin, 11 percent of offences were against a member of the Roma minority.
24. It is evident that only a minor part of the incidents are reported. This is partly due to the common occurrence and partly due to the difficulties to gain anything from the reporting as either the investigation or the prosecution is not likely to take place, especially if the perpetrators are unknown, as is the case in most incidents.
25. In April 2024, in the follow-up procedure of the ICCPR, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern regarding increased hate speech and hate crime and the apparent shortcomings in the identification and processing of hate motives in the criminal procedure system and statistics.⁶ These have not improved since.

Hate speech on social media

26. A recent scientific article from June 2025⁷, where nearly 300.000 messages on Finnish language social media platforms were analysed, noted that hate speech as a concept has been part of the Finnish public debate for the past decade. A major part of the attention related to hate speech has focused on local and national populist politicians who have strongly questioned hate speech as a phenomenon at the same time inciting hatred toward migrants, Muslims and women. This has, in some cases, even lead to convictions.
27. According to the article, the racism debate and the debate on hate speech are strongly dominated by skeptics that are prone to circulate disinformation concerning the perpetrators, victims and contents of racism and hate speech, as well as the measures against them. This creates and strengthen false beliefs concerning restrictions of free speech, as well as create suspicion or even fear toward certain immigrant groups that are presented as perpetrators of various crimes.

Government action plan to combat racism

28. In 2023 and 2024 the Government, after racism and hate speech related scandals, committed itself to an equality statement and subsequently an action plan to combat racism and to promote non-discrimination⁸.
29. The action plan and related campaign did not address the core problems relating to racism, hate speech and hate crimes. Part of the government parties did not commit to its own anti-racism program and the only visible result so far has been a one hour mandatory training for the government ministers on equality and non-

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https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FFUL%2FFIN%2F57876&Lang=en

⁷ [Contested Meanings of Hate Speech and the Post-Truth Condition on Digital Platforms - Kaarina Nikunen, Paula Haara, Heidi Kosonen, Aleksi Knuutila, Reeta Pöytäri, Tuija Saesma, 2025](#)

⁸ <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/promoting-equality>

discrimination. Part of the ministers even dismissed the training as unnecessary and denied any actions of hate speech.

Other topics

Violence against women

30. Violence against women is at a very high level in the Finnish society according to multiple national and international surveys and studies. According to EIGE and FRA, 57 % of women in Finland have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15.⁹ In 2024, the Statistics Finland reported that half of women aged 16–25 have been victims of physical violence, threats of violence, or sexual violence, and every fifth has experienced severe violence or rape.¹⁰
31. The legislation discontinuing mediation in cases involving domestic or intimate partner violence has entered into force in January 2025. While discontinuing mediation is a positive change, potential challenges remain.
32. Regarding services for victims as well as perpetrators, there are currently serious cuts in funding both for the public services as well as private service providers. The division of labour between authorities is unclear or not defined, service paths for the victims are non-existing or unclear. Instead of being directed towards mediation, the victim is at risk of falling in between services.
33. Also, there are no guarantees that the police and prosecution authorities that fail to recognise the violence, will not make decisions not to proceed. Discontinuance is also cost effective when all authorities are facing cuts to their funding.
34. While Finland is increasingly international and multicultural, the language and vocabulary has changed towards propaganda, vilifying and being disrespectful towards the “others”. The media are not sufficiently interfering or aiming at eradicating racism and harmful language in the society. On the contrary, many in high public positions are condoning and glorifying speech and actions which are racist and disrespectful, even at the governmental level.

Anti-gender phenomenon and hate speech against women and LGBTIQ+ persons

35. Lately the phenomenon of anti-gender has raised concerns. Hatred and hate speech are increasingly aimed at women, including LGTBIQ+ persons, women with disabilities and women of ethnic minority groups, and at times turning into acts of violence. It also appears in other ways challenging equality and contributing to discrimination and racism more generally and widely in the society.

⁹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024/domain/violence/FI>

¹⁰ <https://stat.fi/fi/uutinen/viidesosa-nuorista-naisista-on-kokenut-vakavaa-vakivaltaa-tai-raiskauksen> (in Finnish)

36. Anti-gender related racism is also a labour protection issue: academia, political parties and media do not necessarily have structures to support employees who are targeted while doing their work, in particular freelance journalists are in a weak position.
37. In addition to violence, threats and harassment in real life, targeted online harassment is prevalent in Finland, targeting also politicians who defend human rights, journalists who write about “sensitive issues” such as hate speech, racism and migration etc. members of academia etc. This specifically prevails towards female politicians, HRDs, journalists etc.
38. There are incidents where female journalists have been convicted of defamation, when in fact they have spoken out against racism or hate speech and become accordingly victims of SLAPP¹¹.
39. According to a joint survey on sexual harassment conducted by 17 unions under the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland, harassment in the workplace is rather common. The study was conducted in spring 2023. The study found that 12 percent of women reported having experienced face-to-face sexual harassment in their workplace in the past three years and 3 percent have experienced harassment online. The corresponding figures for men are 4 percent and 1 percent.
40. As many as 25 percent of nonbinary persons say they have experienced harassment face-to-face and 10 percent online. Among gender minority respondents, experiences of sexual harassment are slightly more common: 28 percent report having experienced harassment face-to-face and 10 percent online. One in five (20%) of sexual minorities have experienced harassment face-to-face and 5 percent online.
41. Similar results pertaining to harassment are available from the study by UNWomen from 2024.¹² According to the study, nine out of ten have experienced sexual harassment. Experiences of harassment are particularly concentrated among young and minority women: 94 percent of women under 35 have experienced sexual harassment, and 95 percent of women from minority backgrounds. Furthermore, 81 percent of women have experienced harassment in public and semi-public spaces. For example, 59 percent have experienced harassment in outdoor public spaces and more than one in four in public transport.

Hate speech and discrimination of the Sami

42. UN special representative Salvioli noted during his visit in March 2024 and his report in October 2024¹³ that discrimination, racism and hatred against Sámi people are still pervasive in Finnish society in violation of international standards

¹¹ <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/current/journalist-johanna-vehkoo-about-her-five-year-long-legal-battle-finland>

¹² <https://unwomen.fi/uutiset/seksuaalinen-hairinta-loppuu-vain-jos-sen-tekijat-lopettavat-hairitsemisen-un-women-suomen-seksuaalista-hairinta-kasittelevan-raportin-pysayttavat-tulokset-osoittavat-et/> (in Finnish)

¹³ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/117/05/pdf/g2411705.pdf>

on freedom of expression and the prevention and combating of ethnic hatred and discrimination. Freedom of expression does not condone hate speech or discriminatory speech.

43. Numerous interlocutors, including public officials informed him about concerning episodes of overt racism and hate speech expressed in social media, mass media and by public officials, such as members of Parliament, directed against the Sámi people, and the lack of accountability in this regard.

Antisemitism and islamophobia

44. Finnish Human Rights Centre commissioned a study¹⁴ on experiences of and views on antisemitism of those, who identify themselves as Jews in Finland. Most of the respondents are of the opinion that antisemitism has increased in Finland in the last five years. Respondents consider antisemitism on the internet and social media the main problem in Finland, followed by antisemitism in the media, and in political life.

45. The study found inter alia:

- The majority of respondents (83%) believed that antisemitism has increased in Finland over the past five years.
- Over half of the respondents (54%) reported being very or fairly worried about being verbally insulted or harassed, while nearly half (42%) reported being very or fairly worried about being physically attacked.
- Almost half of the respondents (48%) had experienced discrimination in employment in Finland over the past five years.

46. Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) published a report “Being Muslim in the EU” in October 2024.¹⁵ The report found that nearly 1 in 2 (47%) Muslims experience racial discrimination. The highest rates in the 13 countries surveyed are in Austria (71%), Germany (68%) and Finland (63%).

EU Commission infringement proceedings

47. There is an on-going EU Commission infringement proceeding against Finland that pertains to the correct transposition the framework decision on combating racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (EU's Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA).

48. The Commission's stand is that the law on incitement against an ethnic group is too narrowly defined in Finland. The two main issues are: one, the provision does not explicitly criminalise the denial of the Holocaust and, two, the provision does not apply to individuals, but only groups.

49. The government proposal to amend the Criminal Code due to this proceeding is currently in the Parliament.

¹⁴

<https://bin.yhdistysavain.fi/1586428/RWMi5qFyISAkQRjVPSEY0aINBa/Antisemitismiselvitys%202024.pdf> (in Finnish)

¹⁵ <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/being-muslim-eu>