INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATIONS UNDER ARTICLE 14 OF THE ICERD

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The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 1965 and entered into force on 4 January 1969, was the first human rights treaty adopted in the framework of the United Nations providing for a mechanism of international supervision. At present, 177 States are parties to that Convention. The other binding human rights treaties adopted after the ICERD are a) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (16 December 1966), b) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (18 December 1979), c) the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (10 December 1984), d) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989), e) the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (18 December 1990), f) the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (13 December 2006) and g) the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (20 December 2006).

The ICERD has set up a committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), composed of 18 independent experts, which is competent to receive periodic reports, to be submitted biannually by the States parties (Article 9), and inter-State communications (Article 11). The CERD is also the first UN human rights committee which has been empowered, by Article 14 of the ICERD, to receive individual communications against States parties having made a specific declaration to that effect. This example has been followed with respect to the supervisionary committees established by the other human rights treaties adopted in the framework of the United Nations: the competence to receive such communications is provided for in an optional Article 22 for the Committee against Torture (CAT) on 10 December 1984, in an optional Article 77 (not yet entered into force) for the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW) on 18 December 1990 and in an optional Article 31 for the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) of 20 December 2006 or in an optional protocol adopted at the same time as the convention concerned, for the Human Rights Committee (HRC) on 16 December 1966 and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 13 December 2006, or later, as is the case for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 6 October 1999, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) on 10 December 2008 and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 19 December 2011.

A. Individual communications before the CERD

Article 14 of the ICERD provides for an optional declaration by which the States parties may recognize the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals within their jurisdiction claiming

¹ 176 Member States of the United Nations as well as (since 2 April 2014) the State of Palestine. The following 17 Member States of the United Nations are not parties to the ICERD: Angola, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Kiribati, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Myanmar, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Sao Tome & Principe, Singapore, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

² Up to now, no inter-State communication has ever been submitted to the CERD, nor to any other UN human rights committee.

to be victims of a violation by that State party of any of the rights set forth in that Convention. That optional procedure entered into force on 3 December 1982, when the tenth State party (Senegal) made such a declaration. As stated by Professor Theo VAN BOVEN (Maastricht), former Member of the CERD, "[t]he pace of acceptance of the article 14 procedure is slow and disappointing". At present, 57 States have made that declaration: 22 belonging to the Group of Western European and Other States, 16 to the Group of Eastern European States, 11 to the Group of Latin-American and Caribbean States, 5 to the Group of African States (Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, South-Africa and Togo) and 3 to the Group of Asian States (Cyprus, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea).

Up to now (July 2015), only 48 communications submitted under Article 14 of the ICERD led to a decision by the CERD. According to Article 14, § 7 (b), of the ICERD, the CERD will forward "suggestions and recommendations, if any, to the State Party concerned and to the petitioner". The communications which have led to such "suggestions and recommendations" by the CERD were directed against (only) 12 of the 57 States parties to the ICERD having recognized the competence of the Committee to consider individual communications. Those States parties are: Denmark (21 communications), Australia (7), Slovakia (4), the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (3 each), France (2), Germany, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Serbia-and-Montenegro and Switzerland (1 each). In 14 decisions of the Committee relating to such communications, it found a violation of the Convention; in 17 decisions it did not find a violation and it declared 17 communications inadmissible. The greatest number of violations concerned Denmark (6 violations against 6 non-violations and 9 inadmissible communications), Slovakia (2 violations against 2 nonviolations) and the Netherlands (2 violations against 1 non-violation); one violation concerned Germany, the Republic of Korea, Norway (against 1 non-violation and 1 inadmissible communication) and Serbia-and-Montenegro.

The Article of the ICERD which has most frequently been found to be violated is Article 6 ("effective protection and remedies [...] against any acts of racial discrimination which violate his human rights and fundamental freedoms contrary to this Convention") in 11 decisions, followed by Article 2 ("to pursue [...] a policy of eliminating racial discrimination)" in 8 decisions, Article 5 ("to guarantee the right of everyone [...] to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of [...] the right to freedom of movement and residence [(d), (i), ...], the right to work [(e), (i), ...], the right to housing [(e), (iii), ...], the right to education and training [(e), (v), ... or] the right of access to any place or service [(f)]") in 6 decisions and Article 4 (condemnation of "all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin") in 6 decisions.

³ "The Petition System under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. A Sobering Balance-sheet", in Jochen Abraham FROWEIN and Rüdiger WOLFRUM, *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, 2000, pp. 271-287, at p. 275.

⁴ Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

⁵ Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

⁶ Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

 $^{^7}$ The following three communications have not been taken into account: communication N° 12 submitted by the same author (Paul Barbaro) led to the same decision (inadmissibility) as communication N° 7; communication N° 33 submitted by the same author (Kamal Quereshi) led to the same decision (non-violation) as communication N° 27; communication N° 35 was discontinued in 2009.

As stated by Professor Th. VAN BOVEN, Article 14 of ICERD served more "as a breakthrough and a precedent in connection with other international legal instruments". He considers Article 14 as "one of the most under-utilized provisions of ICERD". In his final remarks, he states that "[t]he overall picture regarding article 14 is not satisfactory. The balance-sheet is very modest". In his title and in a subtitle he speaks of "A Sobering Balance-sheet" and a "Dismal Record". Trying to answer the question "why article 14 so far failed to gain impact and vitality", he offers two explanations: a) "many states have always considered ICERD more a (foreign) policy instrument than a (domestic) rights document"; b) "the sheer lack of knowledge and information about the existence of article 14 as a possible recourse is a major impediment. [... A]rticle 14 of ICERD is generally overlooked as a possible avenue of redress". Le.g., the high number of communications directed against Denmark (22 out of 48 or 45 %) is attributable to the efforts of Danish non-governmental organisations as the Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DACoRD) and the Danish Centre for Human Rights.

The most striking feature of the individual communications submitted to the CERD is the foreign origin of the authors of those communications. However, only in a minority of cases (18), the author of the communication had a foreign nationality. In the majority of the cases, the authors were nationals of the State party concerned but, with the exception of one Danish NGO (DACoRD), they were of foreign origin or foreign born [Pakistan and Czech Republic (3 x), Turkey and Iran (2 x), Somalia, Suriname, Thailand, India, Iraq and Mauritius (1 x)] or did belong to a national minority [Rom (6 x), Muslim (2 x), Australian aboriginals or tribes (2 x), Jewish (1 x) or Bask (1 x)]. In one case, 16 the decision does not reveal the nationality nor the origin of the author (For an overview of all communications dealt with by the Committee, see the Table reproduced in Annex).

B. The follow up procedure on individual communications

Following the example of the Human Rights Committee, a procedure on follow-up to communications was formally established on 15 August 2005, when the Committee added the following two paragraphs to rule 95 of its rules of procedure:

"6. The Committee may designate one or several Special Rapporteurs for follow-up on Opinions adopted by the Committee under article 14, paragraph 7, of the Convention, for the purpose of ascertaining the measures taken by States parties in the light of the Committee's suggestions and recommendations.

7. The Special Rapporteur(s) may establish such contacts and take such action as is appropriate for the proper discharge of the follow-up mandate. The Special Rapporteur(s) will make such recommendations for further action by the Committee as may be necessary; he/she (they) will report to the Committee on follow-up activities as required, and the Committee shall include information on follow-up activities in its annual report".

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 284.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.. 285.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, note 37.

¹⁶ Decision of inadmissibility taken on 17 April 2001 concerning communication n° 18/2000 submitted by *F.A.* against Norway.

Since 2006, the Committee includes a chapter on follow-up to individual communications, including sometimes in an annex a table showing a complete picture of follow-up replies from States parties in relation to cases in which the Committee found violations of the Convention or provided suggestions or recommendations in cases of non-violation. With respect to 10 individual communications in which the Committee did not find a violation of the Convention, the Committee nevertheless made recommendations. This is the case with respect to the following communications: a) against Denmark: *B.J., M.B., Kamal Quereshi* and *Ahmed Fara Jama*; b) against Australia: *Z.U.B.S., B.M.S.* and *Stephan Hagan*; c) against Norway: *Michel Narrainen*; d) against Slovakia: *Miroslav Lacko* and e) against Switzerland: *A.M.M.*

Of particular importance are the (14) cases in which the Committee has found a violation of the ICERD. The decisions taken with respect to the Netherlands dating back to the previous century (*A. Yilmaz-Dogan*, 1 August 1988, and *L.K.*, 16 March 1993), the Committee, which had never requested any follow up response, did consider in 2006, when the follow up procedure started, the case "too old" to request information of the State party. As far as the first case is concerned, the Government of the Netherlands had informed the Committee in its 9th periodic report that, after her dismissal, the petitioner had either been employed or received social security benefits, with the exception of a brief period in respect of which the Government had agreed to provide for an *ex gratia* payment. As far as the second case is concerned, the Government had provided in its 13th periodic report elaborate information on new and more strict anti-discrimination guidelines for the police and the public prosecutions department and it had also, in consultation with the applicant and his counsel, provided reasonable compensation.

As far as the Danish cases are concerned, the Committee considered satisfactory the responses of the Danish Government with respect to the three oldest cases: in those three cases, the Government has paid the expenses for legal assistance of the petitioners;²² in addition, in the first case (*Ziad Ben Ahmed Habassi* of 17 March 1999), the police and prosecution authorities involved have been informed of the Committee's opinion and arrangements were made to transmit it to relevant financial institutions;²³ in the second case (*Kashif Ahmad* of 13 March 2000), a copy of the opinion had been sent to the Chief Constable, the District Prosecutor and the Director of Public Prosecutions;²⁴ and in the third case (*Mohammed Hassan Gelle* of 6 March 2006), the Government has forwarded the opinion, which received widespread coverage in the Danish media, to the relevant police and prosecution authorities, but no pecuniary or non-pecuniary compensation was awarded to the petitioner as he had not suffered any pecuniary damage and the action was not aimed at him personally.²⁵

With respect to the three other Danish cases in which the Committee did find a violation, the response of the State Party concerning the first of those cases (*Murat Er* of 8

¹⁷ A/61/18, Annex V, pp. 136-137. The Annual Reports (A/XX/18) of the CERD can be consulted on http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=6&DocTypeID=27.

¹⁸ CERD/C/182/Add.4, § 37.

¹⁹ 8,500 Dutch florins, see VAN BOVEN, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

²⁰ CERD/C/319/Add.2/ § 51.

²¹ VAN BOVEN, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

²² Respectively DKK 20,000 (around 2,700 euros), 22,000 DKK and DKK 40,000 (6,670 US \$).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²⁵ A/62/18, Annex VI.

August 2007) is classified satisfactory in the table of the Committee's Annual Report of 6 January 2012²⁶ referring to its previous report²⁷ in which the Committee did welcome the State party's recognition in its reply of 1 January 2008 of a violation of Article 5, (e), (v), of the Convention while regretting its refusal to acknowledge that it had violated the provisions under Articles 2, § 1, (d), and 6 of the Convention and its view that recognition of a violation in itself should be a sufficient remedy; the Committee considers that the dialogue is ongoing;²⁸ on the second case (Saada Mohamed Adan of 13 August 2010), the Committee considered satisfactory the dissemination of its opinion to the judicial authorities but unsatisfactory the implementation of its recommendation to compensate for the moral damage caused to the petitioner;29 in that case, the petitioner had received compensation for legal assistance during the complaints procedure, but the Government considered that he had not suffered any damage since the statements made in a radio broadcast did not target him personally;³⁰ and on the third case (*Mahali Dawas and Yousef Shava* of 6 March 2012), the Government has informed the Committee that, as Denmark has a free and independent press, the State party has no influence on what is published by the Danish papers but that it would submit information on initiatives taken since 2004 in order to prevent and fight hate crimes.

With respect to the case *Anna Koptova* of 8 August 2000, the Slovak Government has informed the Committee on 5 April 2001 that it had started taking specific measures in the field of legislature, as well as in the interest of providing suitable accommodation for the Romany families staying in provisional dwellings, and on 7 May 2007 that resolutions N°s. 21 and 22 had been abolished, freedom of movement and residence was guaranteed under Article 23 of the Constitution, an Anti-Discrimination Act had been adopted and National Action Plans issued. With respect to the case *Mrs. L. R. et al.* of 7 March 2005, the same Government has informed the Committee on 9 June 2005 that it had translated and distributed the opinion to the relevant government offices and State authorities and that the Municipal Council had, on 26 April 2005, cancelled both resolutions and had engaged in proposals related to low-cost housing in the area concerned. On 7 May 2007, the Government has informed the Committee that the Municipal Council concerned had approved a new zoning plan for the town. Section 2005 and 32 provides a new zoning plan for the town.

With respect to the case the *Jewish Community of Oslo* of 15 August 2005, the Norwegian Government has informed the Committee on 21 February 2006 that it had given wide publicity to the opinion by a press statement, media coverage, translation of the opinion on the Ministry of Justice's website and by a seminar and information circular of the opinion. In addition, Article 100 of the Constitution on freedom of expression and Section 135 (a) of the Norwegian Penal Code criminalizing racist utterances have been amended, the ICERD has been incorporated into Norwegian law and a new Discrimination Act has been enacted. With respect to the case *Dragan Durmic* of 6 March 2006, the Government of Serbia has informed the Committee on 6 February 2007 that it had informed the petitioner of his right to seek compensation and that the Public Prosecutor's Office was analysing the incidences and nature of criminal offences that were to a certain extent tolerated between 2000 and 2005. 34

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²⁶ A/67/18, Chapter VII, p. 83.

²⁷ A/63/18, Annex IV.

²⁸ A/69/18, Annex IV, pp. 159-160.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Annex IV, pp. 158-159.

³⁰ A/67/18, Annex IV, p. 104.

³¹ A/62/18, Annex IV.

³² Ibid.

 $^{^{33}}$ Ibid.

³⁴ A/62/18, Annex VI.

With respect to the case *Turkish Union in Berlin / Brandenburg* (TBB) of 26 February 2013, the German Government stated on 1 July 2013 that it had taken note of the Committee's opinion and the attached individual opinion of Mr. Carlos Manuel Vázquez, translated them into German and forwarded them to the *Länders* Ministries of Justice. On 29 August 2013, the Government added that the distribution and communication of the decision to the courts and prosecutor's offices in the *Länder* was part of the constitutional obligation of the *Länder* and that the opinions had been published on the Homepage of the Ministry of Justice, on the website of the German Institute for Human Rights and in the *Europäische GRundrechte Zeitschrift* (2013, p. 266). The Committee considers that the dialogue is ongoing. There is not yet a follow up to the opinion on the case of *L. G.* against the Republic of Korea which has been adopted very recently (on 1 May 2015).

The Governments concerned are generally forthcoming in disseminating the opinion of the Committee. In some cases, they also took measures to amend the applicable legal provisions. In a few cases, they accepted to award compensation to the authors for the expenses they had made for legal assistance in submitting the communications. Up to now, no State party accepted to award any compensation for pecuniary or non-pecuniary damage.

In a letter of 9 March 2012, the CERD, acting upon a recommendation from its Working group on communications, proposed the creation of a joint treaty body working group on communications, composed of experts of different treaty bodies. Such a joint treaty body would ensure consistency of jurisprudence among treaty bodies and reinforce the justiciability and interdependence of all human rights. It would lead, by benefitting from each treaty body's specific expertise, to more coherent outputs and to better aligned working approaches of all treaty bodies dealing with communications.³⁷ However, in its resolution 68/268 entitled "Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treat body system" adopted on 9 April 2014, the UN General Assembly did not act upon that recommendation.

³⁵ In the same Journal, Professor Christian TOMUSCHAT (Berlin), former Member of the Human Rights Committee, published a critical view on that opinion: "Der 'Fall Sarazin' vor dem UN-Rassendiskriminierungsausschuss", *EuGRZ*, 2013, pp. 262-265.

³⁶ A/69/18, pp. 160-162.
³⁷ PILLAY, Navanethem, *Strengthening the United Nations human rights treaty body system*, Geneva, United Nations, June 2012, p. 68. In a Column entitled "Comments on the UN High Commissioner's Proposals aimed at Strengthening the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System", published in the *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* (2013, pp. 3-8), Professor Manfred NOWAK (Vienna), former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, considers that "Quasi-judicial expert bodies consisting of members with a variety of professional backgrounds that deal with individual 'communications' in a purely written procedure leading to non-binding 'final views' simply do not live up [the] minimum requirements of an effective remedy and seem, more than 20 years after the end of the Cold War, a little anachronistic. [... T]he task of deciding on individual, and also possible inter-State, complaints requires legal expertise and should, therefore, be taken out of the hands of existing treaty bodies and entrusted to a proper judicial body [...]. This is the reason of [the] proposal for the creation of a World Court of Human Rights (see KOZMA/NOVAK/SCHEININ, *A World Court of Human Rights – Consolidated Statute and Commentary*, Wien/Graz, 2010). In contrast to the proposal of a unified treaty body, the full-time World Court with professional judges would be based on a new treaty (Statute) without requiring any amendment of existing human rights treaties" (at p. 8).

Annex:

Table of Individual Communications under Article 14 of ICERD dealt with by CERD

N° com.	Date decision	State party	Author	Nat. or origin author	Decision
N°01/1984	01.08.1988	The Netherlands	A. Yilmaz-Dogan	Turkish	Viol. ³⁸
	18.03.1991	France	Dembe Talibe Diop	Senegalese	Non-viol.
	15.03.1994	Norway	Michel Narrainen	Tamil, Mauritius	Non-viol.
	16.03.1993	The Netherlands	L.K.	Moroccan	Viol.
	15.03.1995	Denmark	C.P.	USA, African origin	Inadmis.
	26.08.1999	Australia	Z.U.B.S.	Pakistan	Non-viol.
N°07/1995	14.08.1997	Australia	Paul Barbaro	Italian	Inadmis.
	12.03.1999	Australia	B.M.S.	India	Non-viol.
N°09/1997	17.08.1998	Sweden	D.S.	Czech origin	Inadmis.
N°10/1997	17.03.1999	Denmark	Z.B.A. Habassi	Tunisian	Viol.
N°11/1998	09.08.2001	Slovakia	Miroslav Lacko	Rom	Non-viol.
N°12/1998	08.08.2000	Australia	Paul Barbaro II	Italian	Inadmis.
N°13/1998	08.08.2000	Slovakia	Anna Koptova	Rom	Viol.
N°14/1998	10.08.2001	Sweden	D.S.	Czech origin	Inadmis.
N°15/1999	31.03.2001	The Netherlands	E.I.F.	Suriname origin	Non-viol.
N°16/1999	13.03.2000	Denmark	Kashif Ahmad	Pakistan origin	Viol.
N°17/1999	07.03.2000	Denmark	B.J.	Iranian origin	Non-viol.
N°18/2000	17.04.2001	Norway	F.A.	-	Inadmis.
N°19/2000	10.08.2001	Denmark	S. S. Mostafa	Iraqi	Inadmis.
N°20/2000	13.03.2000	Denmark	M.B.	Brazil	Non-viol.
N°21/2001	10.08.2001	Sweden	D.S.	Czech origin	Inadmis.
N°22/2002	15.04.2003	Denmark	POEM & FASM	Muslims	Inadmis.
N°23/2002	13.08.2002	Denmark	K.R.C.	USA	Inadmis.
N°24/2002	00.03.2003	France	N. Regalata and C°	Bask	Inadmis.
N°25/2002	16.04.2003	Denmark	A. N. Sadic	Iraqi origin	Inadmis.
N°26/2002	20.03.2003	Australia	Stephen Hagan	Australian tribes	Non-viol.
N°27/2002	19.08.2003	Denmark	Kamal Quereshi	Iranian origin	Non-viol.
N°28/2003	00.03.2003	Denmark	DACoRD	Danish NGO	Inadmis.
N°29/2003	06.03.2006	Serbia & Mont.	Dragan Durmic	Rom	Viol.
N°30/2003	15.08.2005	Norway	Jew. Com. Oslo	Jewish	Viol.
N°31/2003	07.03.2005	Slovakia	Mrs. L.R. et al.	Rom	Viol.
N°32/2003	07.03.2005	Denmark	Emir Sefic	Bosnian	Non-viol.
N°33/2003	09.03.2005	Denmark	Kamal Quereshi II	Iranian origin	Non-viol.
N°34/2004	06.03.2006	Denmark	M. H. Gelle	Somali origin	Viol.
N°35/	2009				discont.
	08.08.2007	Denmark	P.S.N.	Pakistan origin	Inadmis.
N°37/2006	08.08.2007	Denmark	A.W.R.A.P.	Muslim	Inadmis.
N°38/2006	22.02.2008	Denmark	Sinti und Roma	German	Non-viol.
	22.02.2008	Australia	D.F.	New Zealand	Non-viol.
N°40/2007	08.08.2007	Denmark	Murat Er	Turkish origin	Viol.
N°41/2008	21.08.2009	Denmark	A. F. Jama	Somali	Non-viol.

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³⁸ Communications which led to an opinion of violation of the ICERD are reproduced in bold.

N°42/2008	14.08.2009	Australia	D.R.	New-Zealand	Non-viol.
N°43/2008	13.08.2010	Denmark	S. M. Adan	Somali	Viol.
N°44/2009	13.08.2010	Denmark	N. Hermansen et al.	Thai origin	Inadmis.
N°45/2009	26.08.2011	Russian Federation	A.S.	Rom	Inadmis.
N°46/2009	06.03.2012	Denmark	Dawas & Shawva	Iraqis	Viol.
N°47/2010	27.08.2013	Australia	Kenneth Moylan	Aboriginal	Inadmis.
N°48/2010	26.02.2013	Germany	Turk. Union Berlin	Turkish origin	Viol.
N°49/2011	18.08.2014	Slovakia	L.A. et al.	Rom	Non-viol
N°50/2012	18.02.2014	Switzerland	A.M.M.	Somali	Non-viol.
N°51/2012	01.05.2015	Republic Korea	L.G.	New Zealand	Viol.