

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Ref.: AL EGY 1/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

1 April 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/5, 51/8, 55/5, 53/7, 52/9, 50/17 and 49/5.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the alleged patterns of continuous discrimination against Bahá'ís, living in or visiting Egypt, and the alleged arbitrary detention of Mr. Omid Seioshansian, a senior Bahá'í official.**

According to the information received:

Background

While the 2014 Constitution of Egypt states there is an absolute right to freedom of belief, the practice of religious rituals and establishing places of worship are restricted to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism – the three religions recognized officially by the State. The Bahá'í faith is deemed a distinct religion from these three, which has reportedly resulted in discrimination against Bahá'ís in all spheres of life (reference is made, for example, to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Egypt, 20 June 2024, para 20).

While the Bahá'í faith was first introduced to Egypt in 1863, the Bahá'í community established its first institution, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Egypt, in 1925. Opposition to the Bahá'í community by the Sunni clergy began in the early 1920s.

In 1960, the Decree No. 263/1960 “The Presidential Decision on the Matter of the Dissolution of the Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies”, which was issued by President Gamal Abdel Nasser, prohibited all Bahá'í activities, dissolved Bahá'í institutions, and led to the confiscation of all the property owned by the Bahá'í community, including their cemeteries. While adherence to the Bahá'í religion per se was not criminalized by this law, it did lay the grounds for the human rights issues that Bahá'ís face to this day, including in the areas of marriage,

freedom of religion and belief, freedom of assembly and association, cultural rights, and the rights of the child.

Cemeteries

In 1960, the Government allegedly confiscated several Bahá'í cemeteries and has since refused to allocate new land to serve as burial space for Bahá'ís population. Now that only one cemetery allocated to Bahá'ís remains, namely in Cairo's Basatin neighbourhood, the community is lacking access to burial sites. Furthermore, this cemetery is almost reaching its capacity and so, there is an urgent need for burial space for Bahá'ís in Egypt, especially considering the fact that Bahá'ís are spread throughout the country. While Bahá'ís has submitted requests for the allocation of burial grounds in Alexandria and Port Said, the requests have reportedly been rejected by the governate and by the judiciary. According to the information received, Bahá'ís in Egypt are also being denied new cemetery land and space inside of Muslim cemeteries.

Identity Documentation

For decades, Bahá'ís were not able to obtain national identity cards. Given that the Bahá'í religion has not been recognized as an official religion in Egypt, it was not permitted to put Bahá'í as an option indicating a person's religion. As a result, the Government would not issue identification documents to Egyptian Bahá'ís, which constitutes a grave violation of their right to be recognized as persons before the law (article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)) and of any effective legal claim to guarantee their enjoyment of human rights.

Due to the 2008 ruling of the Court of Administrative Justice, in Appeal No. 12780 (Year 61), Bahá'ís are now able to obtain identity cards, with a dash (-) recorded in the field for indicating a person's religion. As Egyptian identity cards still do not recognize the Bahá'í faith as a religion, Bahá'ís continue to, on the one hand, be required to indicate their religion on identity cards whilst, on the other, being denied the right to indicate their religion on official identity documents.¹ The demarcation on the identity cards has allegedly been used as a tool of exclusion and of discrimination against Bahá'ís in their daily life, including in their possibility to earn a livelihood, gain employment, access education, health and other rights. This also leads to harassment from security officials in day-to-day activities. According to the information received, obtaining an identity document is further challenged by the fact that there is only one single office in the entire country where Bahá'ís can request a national identity card and other forms of identification.

¹ In his [2025 thematic report to the Human Rights Council \(A/HRC/58/54\)](#), the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, underscores that persons belonging to minority groups have the right to “not be assigned a religion which does not correspond to their own belief, and to have their religion properly acknowledged and recognized” (para. 66(b)). He also urges States to not take any measures or eliminate those that exist “that preclude the free and genuine expression of the identity of persons belonging to a minority, including in signs of religious affiliation” (para. 71(b)).

Civil Status and Marriages

Bahá'ís are not able to register their marriages. Egypt does not have a civil marriage process and Bahá'í marriages have never been officially recognized. Given that Bahá'í marriages are not recognized, the personal status of these married individuals is marked as “single” in official documentation, including on their identity card. This includes those who have a civil marriage certificate from outside the country. The non-recognition of Bahá'í marriages impedes other areas of daily life. For example, the children of these married couples are seen as illegitimate, in the eyes of the law, and they are not able to obtain birth certificates, and at times even Egyptian nationality. This has put children at risk of statelessness. There are also challenges in securing residency for non-Egyptian spouses. In addition, the women and children in this situation cannot be included in the husband or father's insurance policies and they cannot access his pension or the inheritance he leaves to them.

Harassment and Surveillance

Bahá'í individuals and Bahá'í activities are allegedly under continued surveillance and Bahá'ís face restrictions in movement and freedom of association. Recent years have witnessed an increase in surveillance and an escalation of harassment against the Bahá'ís. For example, according to the information received, the Bahá'í community is required to provide a list of names of the individuals elected to the community's local and national governing bodies to the National Security Agency. Furthermore, an increasing number of Bahá'ís are allegedly being added to the “on-arrival” watch list, which leads them to being held for questioning at the airport upon their return to the country. Bahá'ís are reportedly called into the National Security Office for questioning related to their involvement in Bahá'í activities. This includes, for example, those who organize Bahá'í community gatherings. In addition, social and humanitarian projects of Bahá'ís are shut down, and their friends and associates are discouraged from maintaining relationships with them.

On 11 December 2024, Mr. Omid Seioshanseian, a senior Bahá'í official and Turkish national, was allegedly forcibly detained and disappeared for over 13 hours by the Egyptian State Security at the Cairo International Airport, on his departure from the country after a 10-day stay. Mr. Seioshanseian serves as a Counsellor for the worldwide Bahá'í community, offering a range of pastoral services within the community. According to the information received, while detained, his personal items, including his passport and devices, were confiscated. He was interrogated for approximately three hours about his personal and family life, his visit to Egypt, the persons he met, Bahá'í institutional structures outside of Egypt, and the names of the individuals who serve in these institutions. In addition to being interrogated, he was allegedly handcuffed, blindfolded, physically mistreated, and threatened. He was told by an interrogator that the Bahá'í faith is illegal in Egypt and that he had broken the law by meeting with Bahá'ís during his visit. He was threatened with being detained for up to a week, if he admits to any mistreatment during his time in custody.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information received, we wish to express serious concern that the Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt recognizes only Islam, Christianity and Judaism, excluding other religious or belief communities from official recognition, thereby denying these groups the rights afforded by law to recognized religions. This constitutes discrimination based on religion, in clear violation of articles 2 of the UDHR and the ICCPR, ratified by your Excellency's Government.

We wish to express our serious concern about allegations of limiting Bahá'ís' access to burial sites. We are deeply concerned that Bahá'ís are being prevented from exercising their religious and cultural practices linked to the care of their deceased and their right to enjoy and access the cultural heritage and places of memory of their families.

We are, in addition, concerned about the reported challenges faced by Bahá'ís in accessing identification documents. We are deeply concerned at the fact that access to official documentation in Egypt, which is essential for the enjoyment of one's rights and freedoms in various areas of life, is conditioned upon the disclosure of one's religion or belief, with a choice to be made among a limited number of religious faiths. We are concerned at the discriminatory and adverse effects that such policies and practices may have on the rights to education and employment of Bahá'ís.

Moreover, we express our serious concern about the non-recognition of Bahá'í marriages, in contravention of article 23 of the ICCPR. We are deeply concerned at the discriminatory and adverse effects that such policies and practices may have, which includes leading to cases of statelessness, including of children, in contravention of article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by your Excellency's Government.

In addition, we wish to express our serious concern about the allegation of arbitrary detention and harassment of members of the Bahá'í community, including of Mr. Omid Seioshansian, in contravention of article 9 of the ICCPR.

Taken together, the incidents described above appear to represent a pattern of continuous discrimination against Bahá'ís, aimed at their marginalization in the public space and preventing the enjoyment of their freedom of belief, conscience or religion. This appears to indicate a violation of the right to religious freedom, as contained in article 18 of the ICCPR, and discrimination against a religious minority, prohibited by article 27 of the ICCPR. Such actions may therefore be in contravention of the Arab Republic of Egypt's international human rights obligations.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide detailed information on the reasons for restricting the Bahá'í population's access to burial grounds. In particular, please provide information on the compatibility of such actions with international human rights law and standards, as stated, inter alia, in the UDHR, ICCPR and ICESCR.
3. Please explain the compatibility with international human rights law and standards of requiring the disclosure of one's religion in official national identity documentation and for not recognizing the Bahá'í religion in official national identity documentation.
4. Please provide detailed information on the legal grounds for not recognizing Bahá'í marriages. In particular, please provide information on the compatibility of such actions with international human rights law and standards, as stated, inter alia, in the UDHR and the ICCPR.
5. Please provide detailed information on the legal grounds for not registering the births of newborns, born to parents whose Bahá'í marriage is not recognized, and for not affording them the right to acquire a nationality, thus putting them at risk of being stateless. In particular, please provide information on the compatibility of such actions with international human rights law and standards, as stated, inter alia, in the CRC.
6. Please provide information concerning the legal grounds for the forcible detention and interrogation of Mr. Omid Seioshanseian on 11 December 2024 by the Egyptian State Security at the Cairo International Airport, indicating the compatibility with international norms and standards as stated, inter alia, in the UDHR and the ICCPR.
7. Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that all religious minorities, regardless of their constitutional status, are treated equally. In particular, please provide details on measures taken to ensure respect for the rights of the Bahá'ís to exercise their freedom of religion and belief without discrimination.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Further, we would like to inform your Excellency's Government that after having transmitted the information contained in the present communication to the

Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit a case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to this allegation letter and the Working Group's regular procedure.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

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Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Ganna Yudkivska
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Alexandra Xanthaki
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

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Irene Khan
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Gina Romero
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Nazila Ghanea
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government of its legal obligations under **international law** applicable to the issues brought forth.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

We firstly recall that the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#), adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948, is a foundational standard-setting document of the United Nations system, and that it recognizes:

- in **article 9** that “[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”
- in **article 18** that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”
- in **article 16(1)** that “[m]en and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family.”
- in **article 20(1)** that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”
- In **article 25(1)** that “[e]veryone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”
- In **article 25(2)** that “[a]ll children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.”
- In **article 27(1)** that [e]veryone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Non-Discrimination and Equality

We would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the principles of equality and non-discrimination, which are core elements of the international human rights normative framework and enshrined, inter alia, in **articles 2**

of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR, ratified by Egypt in 1982) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR, ratified by Egypt in 1982). All rights must be enjoyed without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. These guarantees are non-derogable. Under international human rights law, the right to equality and non-discrimination also requires states to take positive measures to address systemic disadvantage and unequal enjoyment of rights. In addition, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to **article 27 of the ICCPR**, which states that "[i]n those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

Freedom of Religion or Belief

We would also like to refer to **ICCPR article 18(1)**, which states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. [general comment No. 22](#) of the Human Rights Committee further explains that "[t]he freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching encompasses a broad range of acts. The concept of worship extends to ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief. In addition, while the manifestation of religion or belief may be restricted as per **article 18(3) of the ICCPR**, to protect public safety, order, health, morals and the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, any such limitation must fulfil a number of obligatory criteria of legality, proportionality and necessity, including the least restrictive measure. According to the Human Rights Committee in its **general comment No. 22**, any restriction may not be imposed for discriminatory purposes and may not be applied in a discriminatory manner (para. 8). Moreover, if a certain belief is treated as an official ideology, this shall not lead to "any impairment of the freedoms under article 18 or any other rights recognized under the Covenant nor in any discrimination against persons who do not accept the official ideology or who oppose it" (para. 10). In addition, the Human Rights Committee raised concern over "any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility on the part of a predominant religious community" (para. 2).

Also, we would like to underline that both **article 13(3)** of the ICESCR and **article 18(4) of the ICCPR** require "States Parties to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

The **1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief ([A/RES/36/55](#))** states in its **article 2(1)** that: "[n]o one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on grounds of religion or other belief." According to **article 4(1)**, "[a]ll States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms [...]" Furthermore, **article 4(2)** states that "[a]ll States shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate

measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter.

The **1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities**, ([A/RES/47/135](#)), refers in **article 1** to the obligation of States to protect the existence and the identity of religious minorities within their territories and to adopt measures to that end. **Article 2** states that minorities “have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.” Moreover, **article 2** states that religious minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations and that they have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties. **Article 5** requires States to plan and implement national policies and programs with due regard for the legitimate interests of religious minorities.

We recall the **2023 recommendation by the Human Rights Committee** ([CCPR/C/EGY/CO/5](#)) in paragraph 44 that urges your Excellency’s Government to take concrete measures to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against religious and belief minorities, including the following measures: (a) amend existing legislation to ensure the protection of the law to all religious and belief minorities and end the abusive use of blasphemy laws against religious minorities for exercising their right to manifest their religion and to (b) eliminate discriminatory policy practices against religious minorities, including with respect to regulating the construction and operation of places of worship and the allocation of land for burial sites.

We recall the **2024 recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child** ([CRC/C/EGY/CO/5-6](#)) in paragraph 20 that expresses concern that the Constitution recognizes only Islam, Christianity and Judaism, excluding other religious or belief communities from official recognition, and urges your Excellency’s Government to accord children of minority religious groups the freedom to manifest their religion.

Cultural Rights

We would also like to refer your Excellency’s Government to the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, as protected under **article 15 of the ICESCR**. State parties to the ICESCR must respect free access by people to their own culture, heritage and other forms of expression, as well as the free exercise of their cultural identity and practices.” In [general comment No. 21](#), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights underscores that **article 15 of ICESCR** “includes the right of minorities and of persons belonging to minorities to take part in the cultural life of society, and also to conserve, promote and develop their own culture. This right entails the obligation of States parties to recognize, respect and protect minority cultures as an essential component of the identity of the States themselves. Consequently, minorities have the right to their cultural diversity, traditions, customs, religion, ... other manifestations of their cultural identity and membership”.

The Special Rapporteur on cultural rights further highlights that “to respect, protect and fulfil cultural rights for all without discrimination, States, and where relevant other actors, including international organizations, cultural institutions, and civil society should: (a) Ensure the right of everyone to participate in cultural life, including the rights to participate on a basis of equality in defining and redefining cultures, and specifically ensure these rights for those facing pervasive or historic discrimination, including indigenous peoples, minorities and women;..(f) Recognize and value cultural diversities, including within minority cultures and other groups, respect their free development within the framework of universal human rights and equality, and avoid abusively restricting their expression ([A/76/178](#)).

Deprivation of Liberty

Article 9 of the ICCPR enshrines the right to liberty and security of person and establishing in particular that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law as well as the right to legal assistance from the moment of detention. At the time of arrest, every person shall be informed of the reasons for the arrest, and shall be promptly informed of any charges against them (**article 9(2)**). Another guarantee is that the detained person shall be brought promptly before a judge (**article 9(3)**) and is entitled to challenge the legality of such detention before a judicial authority (**article 9(4)**). In its **general comment No. 35**, the Human Rights Committee has found that arrest or detention as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights as guaranteed by the Covenant is arbitrary, including freedom of opinion and expression (**article 19**), freedom of assembly (**article 21**), freedom of association (**article 22**) and freedom of religion or belief (**article 18**). It has further stated that arrest or detention on discriminatory grounds in violation of **article 2(1)**, **article 3** or **article 26** is also in principle arbitrary. Furthermore, **article 14 of the ICCPR** upholds the right to a fair trial and equality of all persons before the courts and tribunals.

Right to Marry

We would like to refer to **article 23(2) of the ICCPR**, which states that the right of men and women of marriageable age to marry shall be recognized. In [general comment 19](#), the Human Rights Committee explains that “the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion implies that the legislation of each State should provide for the possibility of both religious and civil marriages.”

Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media”. This right applies online as well as offline and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend.

In its [general comment No. 34](#), the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including “political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs,

canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse” (para. 11). The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in **article 19(3) ICCPR**. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, proving “in specific and individualized fashion the precise nature of the threat, and the necessity and proportionality of the specific action taken, in particular by establishing a direct and immediate connection between the expression and the threat” ([CCPR/C/GC/34](#), para. 35). The Human Rights Committee recalled that the relation between right and restriction and between norm and exception must not be reversed. In this regard, the Human Rights Committee stated that the restrictions must be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function”. ([CCPR/C/GC/34](#), para. 34).

Freedom of Association and Assembly

We would like to refer to **article 21 of the ICCPR**, which states that “[t]he right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.” In addition, **articles 22(1) and (2) of the ICCPR** states that “[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of association with others” and that “[n]o restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”

Rights of the Child

We would also like to refer your Excellency’s Government to **articles 7, 8 and 30** of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC, ratified by Egypt in 1990). **Article 7(1)** states that children “shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.” **Article 7(2)** states that “States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.” **Article 8(1)** states that “States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.” **Article 8(2)** states that “[w]here a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.”

Article 30 states that “[i]n those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”