

**CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION  
AGAINST WOMEN**

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**SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)  
(Submission for the session)**

Prepared based on the 5th and 6th periodic report of the **Republic of Armenia** related to UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.



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## Overall situation

Although Armenia supports a number of international norms relate to ensuring women rights and guarantees the right to equality in its own Constitution, any serious measures aimed at ensuring women rights, gender equality and women participation increase, as well as elimination of violence against women have not been taken since the last reporting period (**43th session 19 Jan 2009 - 06 Feb 2009**) in the country.

Armenia government has discussed its report on the 43rd session and has not fulfilled most of general concluding observations submitted by CEDAW. Only the difference between the minimum ages of women and men for marriage has been eliminated.

International organizations continue to express their concerns about high number of women victims subjected to sexual exploitation and domestic violence in Armenia. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed his concern about the high level of domestic violence following the visit to the country.

“Gender inequality and violence against women are serious human rights concerns in Armenia. More vigorous efforts are needed to address them,” said today Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, publishing the report of his visit to Armenia from 5 to 9 October 2014”<sup>1</sup>.

Armenia remains a country of origin and transit for human trafficking. “Trafficking in women for sexual purposes is widespread. Although Armenia is primarily a country of origin for such crime, it is also a transit country”<sup>2</sup>.

Although Armenia is a mono-ethnic country, a small percentage of its population involves Yezidi Kurd, Russian, and other ethnic groups and the cases of indirect and hidden discrimination against the women belonging to the ethnic groups increase continually. Women belonging to national minorities have no access to education, labor, public administration and participation.

As a result of long-term military conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan hundreds of thousands of people (more than half of whom are women) have been forcibly displaced from Armenia and 20% of occupied Azerbaijan territory. Civilian women have been taken hostage and are still subjected to different exploitation.

Failure to implement the measures to combat stereotypes and bad habits provided by the Convention leads to continued violence against women.

“If sexuality is taboo in Armenia, talking about sexual violence is even more difficult, and almost impossible in some cases. When patriarchal values are so deep-rooted in a nation, women

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<sup>1</sup>Source: COE official web site: <http://www.coe.int/be/web/commissioner/-/armenia-should-intensify-its-efforts-to-ensure-gender-equality-and-protect-human-rights-in-the-justice-system>

<sup>2</sup>Source: <http://kvinnatillkvinna.se/en/country/armenia/womens-situation/>

are naturally considered objects, often available to satisfy all kinds of needs for a man, including sexual ones”<sup>3</sup>.

### **Mono-ethnic policy and its consequences**

Long-term ethnic cleansing policy pursued by Armenia led to that Armenia became a mono-ethnic country.

Only in 1988 250,000 Azerbaijanis have been forcibly deported from Armenia<sup>4</sup>.

Currently, 98.1% of Armenia population is comprised of Armenians, whereas Yezidi Kurds and other ethnic groups and nations make up 1.1% and 0.7% of population respectively<sup>5</sup>.

There are many reports on deplorable situation of Yezidi Kurdish women. Women are deprived of the right to education in their native language. Although in 1934, 45 Kurdish schools were available in Armenia, currently these schools do not exist.

Institute for War & Peace Reporting (or IWPR for short) reports that “The future of Armenia’s Yezidis depends crucially on the next children keeping the culture and language. Currently Armenia has no Yezidi schools or textbooks and all education is done in Armenian”<sup>6</sup>.

The report summarizes the work of women under hard labor conditions. “The women work all day, making cheese and milk and baking bread in special clay ovens. Even young children have their own responsibilities”<sup>7</sup>

The requirements of Article 14 of the Convention are not fulfilled. This provision of the Convention is seriously violated particularly in respect of women belonging to national minorities overwhelming majority of which live in rural areas.

The periodic report submitted by Armenia includes only common words on state support for minorities. In connection with Yezidi Kurds the report states the followings - “The Government of the Republic of Armenia pays special attention to educational and cultural problems of ethnic communities residing within the territory of the Republic of Armenia and having no national statehood. Currently, these are the Yezidies, Assyrians and Kurds”<sup>8</sup>. In fact, there are no real measures relying on real actions or any financial allocations or other actions pursuing the provision and it is not grounded on the actions on execution of the Convention.

A high rate of early marriages is typical for Yezidi Kurds which stems from social reasons. Thus, the Yezidi Kurdish girls are almost deprived of the right to education in their native language.

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<sup>3</sup>Source: Institute for War & Peace Reporting (or **IWPR** for short)<https://iwpr.net/global-voices/standing-womens-rights-armenia>

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://1905.az/en/order-that-deported-100000-azerbaijanis-from-armenia/#more-32083>

<sup>5</sup> Source: [http://www.indexmundi.com/armenia/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/armenia/demographics_profile.html)

<sup>6</sup>Source: Institute for War & Peace Reporting (or **IWPR** for short)<https://iwpr.net/global-voices/armenias-yezidi-kurds>

<sup>7</sup>Source: Institute for War & Peace Reporting (or **IWPR** for short)<https://iwpr.net/global-voices/armenias-yezidi-kurds>

<sup>8</sup>Source: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fARM%2f5-6&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fARM%2f5-6&Lang=en)

Yezidi Kurds have failed to adopt its own national alphabet so far. In addition most of Yezidi Kurds live mostly in rural areas and do not speak Armenian and consequently are not able to get an education in Armenian language successfully. As a result, they cannot receive normal education. Subsequently they have no opportunity to continue their education or find job. Due to this, 13-14 aged girls have no any other plans for the future (education, work) and are compelled to get married. Furthermore due to high level of poverty among Yezidi Kurds the families are interested to settle daughter (to reduce family burden).

Thus, Armenia fails to take effective measures for fulfillment of the requirements of Article 16, paragraph 2 of the Convention.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) “Child Marriage in Armenia” report states that “Rates of child marriage are much higher among the Yezidi minority than among the general population in Armenia; in addition, rates of unregistered marriages are also very high in these communities. Yezidis live mainly in rural communities<sup>9</sup>.”

According to official statistics, in 1989 51,555 Russians lived in Armenia which accounted for 1.6% of overall population. In 2001, as a result of decline for 3.3 times the number dropped to 14,660 people and stood at 0.5%.

Russian population is rapidly aging. Young Russians leave the country due to lack of perspectives. As most of men migrate to Russia and other countries to find job and earn money substantial part of Russians in Armenia are women (elderly women). Unemployment rate among Russian women is quite high. Russian language schools have been closed (16 of 20 Russian language schools were closed). Since Armenian language is used in budget organizations and public bodies, Russian women cannot find a suitable job.

Azerbaijanis made up a significant part Armenia population until 1988 (In 1988 over 250,000 Azerbaijanis were forcibly deported from Armenia). Presently the figure is equal to 0%.

### **Azerbaijani women and children hostages**

Although 22 years passed since ceasefire agreement<sup>10</sup> signing related to the active war in the territory of Azerbaijan committed by Armenia, the Republic of Armenia avoids providing any information on 4,866 people were taken hostage in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. There are 694 women and 154 children among hostages and missing people.

As of August 1, 2014 the State Commission registered 4,015 missing people and 1,409 people have been released from captivity.

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<sup>9</sup>Source: UNFPA official web site: <http://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa%20armenia%20summary.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Source: <http://karabakhinfo.com/1148?lang=en>

The reports on 877 missing people out of 4,015, including 27 children, 99 women and 133 elderly were submitted to the relevant international organizations<sup>11</sup>.

The figure is 4,496 people on the official website of the International Committee of the Red Cross<sup>12</sup>.

There are many reports on sexual exploitation of Azerbaijani women involved in human trafficking for the purpose.

The document we submitted to the International Committee of the Red Cross contains detailed information about the women and girls who were taken hostage as civilians and have not been returned to Azerbaijan yet.

3 out of 6 family members of the Mammadovs who were taken hostage during the occupation of Khojali are women – Mammadova Saltanat Zulal, Mammadova Latifa Ibad and Mammadova Shovkat Ibad – whose further fate is so far unknown.

Though Salimova Tamila was beaten harshly, she clasped her son Salimov Khazar Sayavush tightly and resisted Armenians who wanted to take away the child. At the end, they took the mother, who held her son with full force, to unknown destination together with her minor son during the occupation of Khojali.

Civilians who were trying to escape on a truck were caught by Armenian armed forces during the occupation of Kalbajar. All the men were killed and 14 women were taken hostage.

Armenia keeps ignoring all requests made in regards with the return of children who were minors when they were taken hostage (20 underage girls) and 252 women.

The cases of taking civilians as hostage in contact line between Armenia and Azerbaijan still occur. The citizen of Azerbaijan, resident of Gadabay region, Arabachi village Alakbarova Gatiba Ibrahim born in 1977 was taken hostage on June 7 2016 and has been released on 10 June 2016 as a result of the efforts of international organizations (she has experienced psychosocial problems). Such cases occur continuously.

Some authorities in Armenia violate the requirements of Article 6 of the Convention and facilitate the sexual exploitation of women hostages rather than to provide an effective fight against human trafficking.

## **Recommendations**

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<sup>11</sup>Source:

<http://human.gov.az/az/interviews/view/69/Azərbaycan Respublikası Esir və itkin düşmüş, girov götürülmüş vətəndaşlarla əlaqədar Dövlət Komissiyası İşçisi qrupunun rəhbəri Firudin Sadiqovun Azərbaycan məsahibəsi.#.V1vOBbuLTcd>

<sup>12</sup> **The International Committee of the Red Cross** source: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/nagorny-karabakh-icrc-submits-updated-list-missing-persons>

Armenian authorities should take measures to eliminate discrimination against women belonging to national minorities, and living mainly in rural areas; start programs to prevent early marriage among such groups;

The information about further fate of women and children taken hostage from Azerbaijani territories which are under the effective control of the Republic of Armenia should be disclosed;

Effective measures on release of women hostages subjected to sexual exploitation should be demanded of Armenian authorities.