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World Report 2025 - Armenia

Armenian authorities continued to face significant challenges in providing social security to over 100,000 ethnic Armenians displaced from Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region. Insecurities over the still unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan dominated public discourse throughout the year.

Frequent opposition protests demanding the prime minister's resignation presented public order challenges for law enforcement, whose use of crowd control weapons in at least one instance resulted in dozens seeking medical help highlighting ongoing concerns over accountability for police abuse.

Other areas of concern include intrusive surveillance, domestic violence, discrimination against people with disabilities, and violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

In February 2024, Armenia became the [124th state party](#) to the International Criminal Court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute.

Police Conduct

Lack of effective accountability for law enforcement abuses persisted.

On June 12, police and protesters clashed during a protest near parliament. Police [reportedly](#) exploded a large number of sonic grenades in close proximity to protesters while forcefully dispersing the crowd. Over 100 people sought medical assistance. The authorities charged 15 protesters with hooliganism, and one person for participation in mass riots. Trials were ongoing at time of writing. While the authorities investigated police conduct, they had pressed no charges at time of writing.

Armenian law did not, at that time, specifically provide a basis for use of the type of sonic grenades deployed on June 12. In July, the authorities [added](#) them to the arsenal of Interior Ministry police units but classified critical information about conditions for their use.

On April 15, Samvel Vardanyan, arrested after an altercation with a ruling party MP, [reported](#) that masked men assaulted him as police transported him to a detention facility. Police allegedly left Vardanyan unattended shortly before his assailants appeared to abuse him. Authorities [investigated](#) but have not charged anyone. Vardanyan was on bail awaiting trial on hooliganism and incitement charges at time of writing.

Right to Privacy

In April, the government [approved](#) legislative amendments to “strengthen the security of public spaces,” but in November, to its credit, announced it would drop the bill. If adopted, the bill would have required commercial entities in Yerevan to install video surveillance cameras and provide police with 24-hour access to live feeds and recordings on demand. This would have entailed arbitrary and unjustified intrusions on the right to privacy. The mere existence of video surveillance in publicly accessible areas can have a chilling effect on the rights to privacy and to freedom of assembly, association, and expression, among other rights.

Human Rights Watch [wrote](#) to the authorities in August, detailing how the proposed bill would violate rights and, in October, called on the government to scrap the bill or send it for expert review. The parliament initially postponed the second reading of the bill and, on November 11, the Interior Ministry issued a statement announcing that it would not pursue the second reading.

Freedom of Expression and Information

In the first six months of 2024, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression (CPFE), an Armenian group, [documented](#) 14 incidents of physical violence against 23 journalists and cameramen by police and private individuals during protests, and 43 incidents of other types of pressure.

Politicians and private businesses continued to bring defamation cases against journalists and media outlets, dragging them into lengthy legal battles and threatening heavy financial penalties. A local media advocacy group reported that, from January through June, media outlets faced 29 new defamation suits. In a positive development, the group documented increasing resolution of disputes through the media ethics watchdog rather than courts.

Right to Equality and Nondiscrimination

In June, the Justice Ministry presented for public discussion an anti-discrimination bill that does not include sexual orientation, gender identity, health status, or marital and family status as grounds for protection. Some officials argued that they are implied in the draft’s other personal and social grounds for protection. However, the failure to specifically name them could lead administrative bodies or courts to exclude them, forcing victims to appeal rulings and creating unnecessary barriers to protection.

The bill also makes no provision for NGOs to bring public interest lawsuits on behalf of discrimination victims, something long advocated for by local groups.

Disability Rights

Armenia continues to lack a comprehensive plan to introduce community-based services for people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and continues to prioritize institutions and institutional care. Armenia also continues to allow courts to deprive people with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities of legal capacity and offers no supported decision-making mechanisms.

In May, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs disbanded the independent Monitoring Group for Institutions of Children, Older Persons, and Persons with Disabilities, which it had established by decree in 2018. Authorities claimed that the ministry was not authorized to establish the group. Armenian human rights organizations saw the move as retaliation for the group's public reporting on violations it had documented; authorities failed to meaningfully investigate the group's findings.

Violence against Women and Girls

Authorities [investigated 1,535](#) criminal domestic violence complaints through June, a significant increase over the 484 complaints investigated during the same period in 2023, and brought charges against 197 people. At least four women were killed between September 2023 and September 2024, three by a family member. Three of the four women were over 60.

In a positive move, in April, parliament adopted [amendments](#) strengthening the country's domestic violence legislation. The amendments removed the reference to "family harmony" as the law's primary goal and extended the definition of acts of domestic violence to include, among other things, forced medical and psychiatric interventions, hindering access to medical care, virginity testing, prohibiting or hindering contacts with relatives and friends, and various forms of exercising control over a partner.

The amendments criminalized stalking as a standalone crime. They also clarified that perpetrators of domestic violence can include partners, former partners, and individuals in unregistered marriages, and specified that causing a child to witness domestic violence itself constitutes violence cognizable under the law.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people continue to face discrimination, harassment, and violence.

Fear of discrimination and humiliation due to public disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity and lack of trust in official investigations continue to prevent many LGBT people from reporting hate crimes against them. According to LGBT rights groups, investigations into such crimes are often [inconclusive or ineffective](#) and the charges brought often do not reflect the homophobic and transphobic motives of perpetrators. The criminal code does not explicitly recognize animus due to sexual orientation or gender identity as an aggravating circumstance in

hate crimes cases and law enforcement bodies are still reluctant to consider such animus when determining what charges to file.

Local LGBT rights groups and activists documented 39 cases of physical violence, including 27 cases of violence committed by family members against LGBT people, from January through July. The groups also documented several cases of LGBT students dropping out of schools due to bullying. In one case documented by a group, the director of a child support center allegedly disclosed the sexual orientation of a new pupil to other children, disparaged her, and prohibited other children from interacting with her.