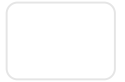


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World Report 2023 - Armenia

Political tensions and growing insecurity from the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh dominated events in Armenia.

Authorities pursued ambitious judicial, police, and constitutional reforms. Human rights problems included ill-treatment by law enforcement, interference with freedom of assembly, domestic violence, discrimination against people with disabilities, and violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Russia-brokered truce broke down several times as Azerbaijan made incursions in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. The political opposition blamed Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, held ongoing protests, and demanded his resignation.

Armenian authorities reported that the fighting temporarily displaced more than 7,600 civilians, mostly women and children, from three regions of Armenia that border Azerbaijan and damaged or destroyed numerous residential buildings. Sporadic incidents of military hostilities continued to threaten the safety and livelihoods of civilians residing in villages in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

Aftermath of the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict

The Russia-brokered 2020 truce broke down several times as Azerbaijan made incursions into Armenia. Sporadic incidents of military hostilities continued to threaten the safety and livelihoods of civilians residing in villages in Nagorno-Karabakh and in several surrounding districts and along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border

Armenian authorities reported that the September 2022 fighting killed at least three civilians and temporarily displaced more than 7,600 civilians, mostly women and children, from three regions of Armenia that border Azerbaijan, and damaged or destroyed numerous residential buildings. Three ethnic Armenian civilians were also killed in Nagorno Karabakh in earlier conflict-related incidents.

A video authenticated by Human Rights Watch showed the extrajudicial execution of at least seven Armenian soldiers, apparently by Azerbaijani forces, during the September 2022 fighting.

According to Armenian lawyers, at least 30 Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and three civilians remain captured in relation to the 2020 hostilities remain in Azerbaijani custody by October 2022. Azerbaijani authorities do not recognize any of these individuals as POWs (see Azerbaijan chapter).

According to the Ombudswoman's office, as of late August, 303 people, a mix of civilians and military, remain missing from the 2020 hostilities. Lawyers and human rights groups in Armenia allege that some were last seen alive in the custody of Azerbaijani forces.

In October 2022 the Azerbaijani Prosecutor General's Office stated that since the 2020 ceasefire, through mid-October 2022, 34 civilians were killed and another 80 wounded by landmines in Nagorno Karabakh and the surrounding area.

Neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia is a party to the international treaty prohibiting anti-personnel landmines.

Ill-Treatment in Custody

Torture and ill-treatment in custody persists and is often perpetrated with impunity. Even when criminal investigations are launched in response to allegations of torture, they are mostly closed based on findings that no crime was committed or suspended for failure to identify a suspect.

Seven years after torture became a specific criminal offense in Armenia, in March a court delivered its first ruling on such charges, sentencing a former prison official to seven years and six months. Previously, officials held accountable for physical abuse faced general "abuse of office" offenses.

Freedoms of Speech and Assembly, Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Law enforcement interfered with freedom of assembly during protests throughout the year. The [Armenian Helsinki Committee](#), a non-governmental group, [documented](#) disproportionate use of force during opposition protests in May and June.

In [August](#), police in Yerevan briefly detained without explanation some 20 people protesting Russia's war in Ukraine. In [September](#), police outlawed a protest in front of the Russian embassy, briefly detaining two activists.

The [Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression](#) (CPFE), a local group, [noted](#) an increase in violence against journalists. Through June 2022, they documented 12 incidents with 13 victims, perpetrated by both public officials and private individuals. Most happened during various opposition protests. CPFE reported 23 cases of other types of pressure during the same period.

In a positive move, Armenia decriminalized "severe insult," removing the offence from the criminal code.

Armenia increased fines for failure to provide official information upon request, but CPFE [reported](#) 69 cases of violation of the right to receive and disseminate information.

Authorities [continued](#) to press spurious criminal incitement charges against Sashik Sultanyan, chairperson of the nongovernmental Yezidi Center for Human Rights. The charges stem from Sultanyan's public interview alleging discrimination of the Yezidi minority in Armenia.

Disability Rights

Children with disabilities remain segregated in orphanages, special schools, or at home, with little or no education.

In 2022, there were 475 children with disabilities living in five state orphanages; only 230 attended school. The government has not announced comprehensive plans to relocate children with disabilities from state institutions to birth or foster families. The government continued to invest in the three remaining state orphanages for children with disabilities, instead of investing in community-based services and support, in line with international obligations. An unknown number of children with disabilities also continued to live in six private orphanages, with minimal government oversight.

Children who live in orphanages have the right to apply for state financial support to buy a home when they turn 18. In October 2021, the government adopted a discriminatory decree effectively stripping people without "self-care skills" who live in institutions of this right.

The authorities have not yet fulfilled their commitment to introduce legislation for supported decision-making mechanisms. Adults with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities can be deprived of legal capacity and placed under full guardianship, in violation of international obligations. Authorities lack comprehensive plans to introduce community-based services for people with psychosocial disabilities, and instead continue to invest in institutions and institutional care.

In August, the government adopted two regulations on personal assistance services and reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. However, [according](#) to two disability rights groups—the Coalition on Inclusive Legal Reforms and Disability Rights Agenda—the regulations on personal assistance services are available only to people with disabilities from socially and economically marginalized families, and they will have no say over when and how they receive it.

In November 2022, Armenia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, making it possible for individuals to file complaints with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which oversees states parties' compliance with the convention.

Violence against Women and Children

Domestic violence cases remain largely underreported. A [2021](#) survey in Armenia showed that almost 36 percent of women interviewed who were ever in a partnership experienced at least one form of physical, sexual, or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partners; only 5 percent of those who experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner sought help from police and only 4.8 percent sought help from a health provider. sought help from police and only 4.8 percent sought help from a health provider.

The authorities investigated 391 criminal domestic violence complaints through June, bringing charges against 128 persons. In 85 of those cases, husbands were alleged perpetrators. Authorities initiated 21 cases against perpetrators for failing to fulfill or observe protective measures.

[Eight](#) women had been killed by partners, former partners or family members as of August 31. In [March](#), a man killed himself and his ex-wife. According to their son, the man repeatedly violated police-imposed protective measures and kept threatening and harassing his ex-wife. Police were aware of the threats but failed to take further steps.

Law enforcement bodies lack adequate awareness and training on protection mechanisms required by law to prevent domestic violence, such as protection orders, and do not adequately apply or enforce them.

Authorities opened support centers providing psychological and other support to domestic violence survivors in all regions of Armenia, but state funding for them, according to women's rights groups, is inadequate.

There are only [two](#) domestic violence shelters; both are in Yerevan and are run by a nongovernmental organization.

The ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) remained stalled following misinformation campaigns in previous years claiming that the convention threatens traditional values and families.

The new criminal code identifies domestic violence as an aggravating circumstance in a number of crimes, but domestic violence is not a stand-alone criminal offense.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Armenia continue to face harassment, discrimination, and violence. The criminal code does not recognize animus due to sexual orientation or gender identity as aggravating criminal circumstances in hate crimes.

In March a criminal court delivered the first verdict in which violence against a person was committed based on a homophobic motive.

In its May [judgement](#), the European Court of Human Rights found that Armenia violated the prohibition against torture and anti-discrimination in the case of [Oganezova v. Armenia](#). Oganezova was a well-known LGBT activist whose club was attacked and set on fire in 2012. The court also found that Armenian authorities failed to discharge their positive obligation to effectively investigate the arson attack, which was committed with a homophobic motive.

Fear of discrimination and humiliation due to public disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity continue to prevent many LGBT people from reporting crimes against them, even when they are clearly motivated by anti-LGBT bias. When reported, investigations into such crimes are often inconclusive or ineffective.

In [August](#), a man used anti-trans slurs while approaching a trans woman standing on a street and slapped her hard with a ring on his finger, causing an injury. A local group with homophobic and transphobic bias handed him a certificate for "carrying out patriotic acts." There was no effective investigation at time of writing.

New Generation and PINK, two LGBT rights groups, documented 27 incidents of physical attacks based on sexual orientation or gender identity through September. Authorities initiated criminal investigation in 12 cases. Armenia lacks comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.

Key International Actors

The European Union sought a greater proactive role in conflict resolution efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. European Council President Charles Michel hosted several [rounds](#) of trilateral meetings with the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders, discussing issues related to border delimitations, transport links, and peace agreement that would also address the rights and security of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population.

In [October 2022](#), the Council of the European Union announced the deployment of up to 40 EU monitors along the Armenian side of the international border with Azerbaijan to "facilitate[e] the restoration of peace and security... , the building of confidence and the delimitation of the international border between the two states."

Also in [October](#), by invitation of the Armenian government, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) announced it would send a team to Armenia to "assess the situation in certain border areas."

In its November 2021 [Concluding Observations](#) the United Nations Human Rights Committee, *inter alia*, urged Armenia to amend legislation to ensure equality and non-discrimination on all grounds, including on sexual orientation and gender identity, and to ensure access to effective and appropriate remedies for victims of discrimination. It also urged Armenia to criminalize acts of hate speech and hate crime on all prohibited grounds. It further recommended revising the law on domestic violence to ensure "a victim-centered approach that guarantees access to immediate means of redress and protection."

The committee also urged prompt, impartial, thorough and effective investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment, and for perpetrators to be prosecuted, and victims provided with full reparation.

The [EU-Armenia Partnership Council](#) meeting in May reiterated that of democracy, good governance, rule of law, fight against corruption, human rights and gender equality remained the cornerstone of the Eastern Partnership policy framework. In April, the EU encouraged Armenia to make further progress towards greater [freedom of the media](#).

In its January [resolution](#), the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly called on Armenia, *inter alia*, to adopt anti-discrimination legislation, adding sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics to the prohibited grounds for discrimination.

In [May](#) the US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Armenian minister of foreign affairs launched the US-Armenia strategic dialogue, that includes discussion on programs, *inter alia*, to support human rights, media literacy, social protection, and justice sector reforms.

Annual report on the human rights situation in 2022

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