

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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asylum had disappeared. Many NGOs and politicians demanded the immediate assignment of a legal guardian to all unaccompanied minors on their arrival, rather than only when admitted to the asylum procedure, which could take several months.

DISCRIMINATION

Law enforcement continued to use facial recognition technology without a clear legal basis, despite its potentially discriminatory impact on gender and ethnic and racial minorities, as well as on rights to privacy, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Racial profiling by police persisted and there was still no effective accountability mechanism.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Failures to investigate allegations of excessive use of force by the police, such as at the 2021 May Day demonstration, persisted.² An independent investigatory body, announced by the government in 2020, had not been established by the end of the year. Police were still not required to wear identification badges, further impeding accountability.

FAILURE TO PREVENT CLIMATE CHANGE

Austria failed to reach its climate targets, including the sustainable reduction of carbon emissions, and there was no active climate action law in place.

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1. Austria: "If housing was a human right, I wouldn't live like this" – Barriers to Accessing Homeless Assistance Services in Austria, 7 April
 2. "Amnesty criticizes climate of impunity for police violence in Austria", 26 January (German only)

AZERBAIJAN

Republic of Azerbaijan

Head of state: **Ilham Aliyev**

Head of government: **Ali Asadov**

Violations of international humanitarian law continued to be reported and there was no

notable progress investigating alleged war crimes committed during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Freedom of expression, assembly and association remained severely restricted as authorities carried out arbitrary arrests and politically motivated prosecutions of civil society activists, crushed peaceful protests and hindered the work of independent organizations and media outlets. Women and girls continued to face discrimination.

BACKGROUND

Azerbaijan's role in the supply and transit of energy supplies grew. It pursued an increasingly assertive economic and military policy, particularly after Russia's influence in the region fell following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent Western sanctions.

Security along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border remained fragile. During a flare-up between 12-14 September, Azerbaijani shelling inside Armenia proper, in the Syunik, Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor provinces, killed at least two civilians. In October, Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed on the short-term deployment of an EU monitoring mission along their border.

The Lachin corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, was blocked since 12 December and remained closed at the end of the year. Dozens of Azerbaijani protesters had blocked the road, demanding an end to alleged unlawful mining in the area and that Azerbaijan retake control of the corridor. Russian peacekeeping forces subsequently barricaded the road to prevent an escalation of tensions. Access to essential goods and services for ethnic Armenian residents of Nagorno-Karabakh was disrupted and hundreds of people were stranded.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

On 2 October, the Prosecutor General's Office opened an investigation into a video which had first appeared online shortly beforehand showing a group of men in Azerbaijani

military uniforms rounding up and shooting at least six Armenian soldiers. The investigation was continuing at the end of the year, with no progress reported in identifying those responsible. Likewise, no substantive progress was made in investigating war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law during the 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and in its immediate aftermath, or in identifying and bringing to justice suspected perpetrators.

According to an ICRC report issued in August, over 300 Armenians missing on Azerbaijan's territory remained unaccounted for.

People continued to be killed and injured by mines which Azerbaijan claimed Armenian forces continued to lay in its internationally recognized territory, retaken in 2020. Azerbaijani authorities also maintained that the mine maps provided earlier by Armenia were not reliable. In October, the Azerbaijani authorities reported that 45 people had been killed and 221 injured by mines since the 2020 conflict.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Media remained severely restricted, with websites publishing dissenting views blocked and critical social media users arbitrarily penalized and prosecuted. Having effectively muzzled most of the independent media in the country, authorities targeted critical outlets reporting on Azerbaijan from abroad.

On 8 February, the president enacted a new media law requiring the owners of media outlets serving Azerbaijani audiences to reside permanently in the country, making them vulnerable to censorship and persecution. The new law further increased state control over Azerbaijani media by, among other things, requiring all journalists to obtain official registration and report information "objectively", while failing to provide a clear explanation for this requirement in the law.

Authorities continued to subject civil society activists and independent media to arbitrary arrest and other forms of harassment. In September Azerbaijani human rights

organizations reported that 99 people were imprisoned on politically motivated charges.

Female journalists appeared to be targeted in particular. On 15 February, police detained, beat and insulted two journalists, Fatima Movlamli and Sevinj Sadigova, while they were covering protests by mothers of deceased Azerbaijani servicemen. Ayten Mammedova sustained minor injuries when she was assaulted in a lift on 8 May by an unknown assailant with a knife. His threats made it clear that the attack was connected to her work as a journalist.

On 23 April, former prisoner of conscience and prominent activist Bakhtiyar Hajiyev reported that he had been kidnapped and beaten by masked men who warned him against criticizing the interior minister. On 9 December, following a private dispute, a Baku court ordered his pretrial detention for 50 days over politically motivated charges of hooliganism and contempt of court. Activists and individuals with dissenting views over the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict were targeted by an online smear campaign reportedly orchestrated through government-linked social media accounts.

On 20 September, Ahmad Mammadli, activist and head of the NGO Democracy 1918 Movement, was jailed for 30 days for criticizing President Aliyev following clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In November, two other activists of the NGO were also given 30 days' detention for purportedly disobeying police.

On 11 September, Avaz Zeynali, chief editor of the independent news outlet Xural, and lawyer Elchin Sadigov, known for representing opposition figures, were arrested on politically motivated charges of accepting and facilitating bribery, respectively. On 20 September Elchin Sadigov was transferred by the court to house arrest, while Avaz Zeynali remained in pretrial detention at the end of the year.

At least six activists critical of the government were arrested on what appeared to be fabricated drug-related charges, in separate cases, after their asylum

applications were rejected by Germany and they were deported to Azerbaijan.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

The right to freedom of association remained curtailed while excessive restrictions, both in law and practice, continued to hinder the work of human rights defenders and NGOs.

Authorities continued to arbitrarily restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Police broke up peaceful anti-government rallies in the capital, Baku, on at least three occasions between May and November. Peaceful protesters were rounded up, beaten and arbitrarily detained; most were released shortly afterwards without formal charges being brought.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

On 4 July, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern about internally displaced women and girls who faced limited access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. It recommended that Azerbaijan abolish restrictions in the country's Labour Code, which prohibits women from working in 204 professions.

BAHRAIN

Kingdom of Bahrain

Head of state: **Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa**

Head of government: **Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa**

Prisoners were tortured and subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment, including medical neglect, delays in medical treatment as reprisal and denial of contact with family members. Authorities continued to restrict freedoms of expression and assembly and to hold prisoners for exercising these rights. The government did not adequately protect migrant workers from exploitation or take adequate steps to address the climate crisis. The government tightened access to healthcare for stateless children.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

At least six prisoners were tortured and otherwise ill-treated during the year.

In February, Ahmed Jaafar Mohamed told the Office of Public Prosecution's Special Investigation Unit (SIU), the agency that investigates government abuses, that Jaw prison guards had beaten him when he was forcibly deported from Serbia to Bahrain on 24 January. The SIU told the UN that it was investigating the allegation, but did not report any results.

In March, authorities moved Ahmed Jaber Ahmed to an external hospital only after 11 months of illness had left him unable to walk or dress himself. The hospital diagnosed tuberculosis that had spread to his spinal column, requiring that he be put in a halo brace. Denial of medical care can be considered cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In May, AbdAli Khayer, a Jaw inmate imprisoned on terrorism charges in a mass trial, said in a voice-recorded call from the prison that when he told a guard he needed treatment at the prison clinic for painful gout that was making it difficult for him to stand, the guard responded by beating him with his fists.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

The authorities violated prisoners' right to health by failing to provide them with adequate medical care compared to that available in the community.

Prison officials deliberately denied access to medical care to prisoners who spoke out as a punitive measure. In retaliation for his chanting pro-Palestinian slogans, authorities refused to take prisoner of conscience AbdulHadi al-Khawaja from Jaw prison to a medical appointment for possible glaucoma for nine months, putting him at risk of blindness.¹

When tuberculosis, an infectious disease, affected several inmates at Jaw prison, the administration did not institute preventive measures including contact tracking and testing. Authorities returned Hasan Abdulla Bati from hospital to his cell with eight other