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Republic of Armenia

Head of state: **Serzh Sargsyan**

Head of government: **Hovik Abrahamyan**

Peaceful protesters were dispersed by police using excessive force in several instances. Activists working on controversial issues were threatened and attacked.

Background

Between July and August, skirmishes in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border turned into heavy fighting resulting in the reported death of 13 Azerbaijani soldiers and five Armenians, including two civilians.

On 17 July, the Armenian government announced its plans to sign an agreement joining the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union by the end of the year, after it had opted out of signing the EU Association Agreement in 2013.

Freedom of assembly

Police broke up peaceful protests using excessive force on a number of occasions throughout the year. On 7 March, hundreds gathered outside the Ministry of Finance to protest against a controversial pension reform proposal. Police dispersed the peaceful protesters using excessive force. Three persons were arrested, fined and released the next day; two were allegedly ill-treated while in detention. On 23 June, police violently dispersed around 50 demonstrators in Yerevan protesting against electricity price increases, arresting 27. Later the same day, police officers physically assaulted three journalists waiting for the release of protesters outside the Kentron police station.

Women's rights

On 5 November, staff of the NGO Women's Resource Centre and other women's rights activists were threatened and verbally assaulted as they were leaving a court room where they had been

assisting a victim of domestic violence. In 2013, the Women's Resource Centre had received anonymous death threats following its calls for gender equality legislation. No effective investigations into either of these incidents had been conducted by the end of the year.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

The adoption of a draft bill prohibiting all forms of discrimination was put on hold, while provisions expressly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation were removed. The anti-discrimination bill was drafted as part of the requirements for Armenia's EU Association membership, but was abandoned after the government opted instead to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.

On 25 July 2013, a court in Yerevan sentenced two young men who threw Molotov cocktails into a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people friendly bar to two-year suspended sentences. Despite admitting the homophobic motives behind their attack, both men were amnestied in October 2013.

Conscientious objectors

By the end of the year, all 33 Jehovah's Witnesses who had been detained for refusing to perform alternative service in previous years were released and required to perform alternative service.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Local human rights defenders continued to raise concern over high numbers of reported beatings and ill-treatment in police custody.

Authorities still had to effectively investigate the allegations of ill-treatment in custody of the opposition leader Shatn Harutyunyan. Shatn Harutyunyan and 13 other activists were arrested following clashes with the police on 5 November 2013, when they were attempting to march to the presidential building. Allegations of ill-treatment by two activists detained during protests on 7 March also remained without effective investigation.

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