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Human Rights Committee

Report on follow-up to the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee*

Addendum

Evaluation of the information on follow-up to the concluding observations on Armenia

Concluding observations (133rd session): CCPR/C/ARM/CO/3, 3 November 2021

Follow-up paragraphs: 16, 40 and 42

Information received from State Party: CCPR/C/ARM/FCO/3, 21 January 2025

Information received from stakeholders: Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia,¹ 20 May 2025

Committee's evaluation: 16 [B], 40 [C] [B] and 42 [B]

Paragraph 16: Violence against women

The State Party should redouble its efforts to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women effectively, including domestic and sexual violence, in particular by:

(a) Revising the law on domestic violence to ensure a victim-centred approach that guarantees access to immediate means of redress and protection;

(b) Establishing an effective mechanism to encourage the reporting of cases of violence against women and by intensifying efforts to address the social stigmatization of victims;

(c) Ensuring that all cases of violence against women are promptly and thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, are punished with appropriate sanctions and that victims have access to effective remedies and means of protection, including sufficient, safe and adequately funded shelters and suitable medical, psychosocial, legal and rehabilitative support services throughout the country, during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond;

(d) Considering ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

* Adopted by the Committee at its 144th session (23 June–17 July 2025).

¹ Submission available at

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/FollowUp.aspx?Treaty=CCPR&Lang=en.



Summary of the information received from the State Party

(a) On 1 July 2024, amendments to the 2017 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence and the Restoration of Peace in the Family entered into force, including amendment of the title to “Law on the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and the Protection of Persons Subjected to Family and Domestic Violence” and changes to 11 of the 23 articles. The amendments are aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the fight against domestic violence, raising public awareness and improving social and psychological support services provided to victims of violence.

The existing definitions and main concepts in the Law were clarified and brought into line with the definitions in the Criminal Code. For example, the definition of domestic violence was changed to include violence regardless of the circumstances of cohabitation and that committed between partners, former partners or former family members, and a child who witnessed the violence or suffered the negative consequences thereof is now considered a victim of violence. The definition of the conciliation procedure has been repealed, and the Law establishes free and preferential medical care and services for persons subjected to domestic violence. The deadlines for the implementation of urgent intervention and protection-oriented decisions have been revised.

Furthermore, a centralized data-collection system was launched to register cases of domestic violence, in order to streamline activities to protect persons subjected to domestic violence. The data collected will serve as a basis for developing further strategic plans and activities.

(b) Work is under way to launch a mobile application, entitled “SAFE YOU”, which will allow victims of violence to promptly call the police and receive support.

To raise public awareness of domestic violence, information corners have been set up in police units, providing literature on domestic violence, including information leaflets and “SAFE YOU” application posters, and information on support centres, hotlines and organizations providing services to victims of domestic violence.

(c) The Investigative Committee produces semi-annual and annual reports on cases of domestic violence.

In 2023, 1,848 criminal proceedings related to domestic violence were investigated by the Investigative Committee, compared to 730 in 2020, 556 in 2021 and 960 in 2022. Of the 1,848 criminal proceedings investigated in 2023: 338 were completed with indictments (compared to 144 in 2020, 129 in 2021 and 122 in 2022); 8 proceedings were completed with final acts (proceedings of medical coercion) and sent to court; 557 proceedings were terminated (compared to 358 in 2020, 252 in 2021 and 301 in 2022), of which 463 were terminated on rehabilitative grounds, 90 on non-rehabilitative grounds and 4 on other grounds; 144 are in a passive stage; 14 were forwarded to the appropriate jurisdiction; 179 were combined; and 608 proceedings were passed to the following year.

Of the 349 defendants involved in the 338 criminal proceedings completed with indictments, 259 were victims’ spouses. A total of 359 individuals were recognized as victims. For 152 individuals, criminal prosecution was not initiated or was terminated on non-rehabilitative grounds.

(d) A strategic plan for the implementation of gender policy in Armenia for the period 2024–2028 is currently being developed. The current document sets out six priorities: overcoming gender discrimination in all areas of management and at the decision-making level; encouraging gender-sensitive approaches in work activities and reducing the gender gap in the workforce; overcoming gender discrimination in the field of education and science; ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in the health sector; ensuring prevention of and protection from gender-based violence and discrimination; and developing gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches to climate change.

Under the fifth priority of the strategic plan, action is envisaged to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Summary of the information received from the national human rights institution

The Office of the Human Rights Defender notes that, despite legislative progress, gaps remain in the prevention and elimination of domestic violence, particularly concerning the legal provisions and their implementation. Article 12 (1) of the 2017 Law prohibits the application of emergency intervention or protection orders against minors or incapacitated persons, which is problematic as regards the application of protection measures for victims. Misconceptions and stereotypes regarding women and domestic violence persist and are rooted throughout society, including discriminatory approaches among law enforcement and judicial authorities, which have led to cases of professional misconduct. The Human Rights Defender has recommended the provision of mandatory and ongoing training for relevant professionals on domestic and international standards.

Support services for victims, such as shelters and psychological and economic assistance, remain insufficient and unevenly distributed throughout the country. There are gaps in interdepartmental coordination in law enforcement, and legislative mechanisms for protecting child victims are incomplete. Furthermore, Armenia lacks a comprehensive national strategy and action plan for preventing domestic and family violence; a draft strategy for 2024–2028 has been developed but not yet adopted.

Committee's evaluation

[B]

While welcoming the amendments to the law that is now entitled the “Law on the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and the Protection of Persons Subjected to Family and Domestic Violence”, including the provisions establishing free and preferential medical care and services for persons subjected to domestic violence, the Committee is concerned about the reports of the discriminatory application of protection orders. It further regrets the lack of concrete information, including statistical data, on the means of redress provided to victims. It reiterates its recommendation in this regard, and requests further information on the new amendments to the legislative framework, their practical application and their impact on ensuring adequate enforcement and monitoring of protection orders.

The Committee welcomes the work carried out to launch the “SAFE YOU” mobile application to facilitate immediate support to victims, and the provision of information in police stations to increase public awareness of domestic violence. It regrets, however, the reports indicating that misconceptions and stereotypes regarding women and domestic violence persist, leading to cases of professional misconduct for discriminatory approaches, including among law enforcement authorities. It reiterates its recommendation in this regard, and requests further information on efforts made to increase awareness among the general public of gender stereotypes and domestic violence, tackling also the root causes and negative effects of domestic violence, and to address the social stigmatization of victims. It further requests information on the progress of development of the mobile application and its expected launch date, and information as to whether mechanisms will be put in place to evaluate the impact of the mobile application on the reporting of cases of violence against women.

The Committee notes the data provided on relevant criminal proceedings, and requests additional information on the number of eventual convictions and the sanctions imposed, and on the medical, psychosocial, legal and rehabilitative support services received by victims. It regrets the reports indicating that support services for victims remain insufficient, and reiterates its recommendation in this regard. The Committee requests additional information on the steps taken to increase the number of shelters in the State Party and to ensure their adequate funding.

While noting with satisfaction the information that a strategic plan for the implementation of gender policy in Armenia for the period 2024–2028 is being developed, and that action is envisaged under one of the plan’s priorities to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the Committee regrets the reports indicating that the plan has yet to be adopted. It requests further information on the progress of the adoption and implementation of the plan and on the

specific action taken to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Paragraph 40: Right of peaceful assembly and excessive use of force

In line with the Committee's general comment No. 37 (2020), the State Party should:

- (a) **Strengthen its efforts to ensure that all law enforcement officers found responsible for excessive use of force during the March 2008, June 2015, July 2016 and April 2018 events, including those with command responsibility, are held accountable and appropriately sanctioned, and that all the victims of those acts receive adequate compensation and rehabilitation;**
- (b) **Review the amendments to the law on freedom of assemblies to bring it into conformity with article 21 of the Covenant;**
- (c) **Refrain from undue interference with assembly participants and reduce police presence at peaceful demonstrations;**
- (d) **Ensure that impartial and thorough investigations are undertaken without delay by the public prosecutor's office into all allegations of the excessive use of force and arbitrary arrest and detention by State agents at protests, and ensure that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, that they are punished, and that the victims have access to adequate remedies;**
- (e) **Ensure that domestic laws and regulations on the use of force are in full conformity with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, that all law enforcement officers systematically receive training on the use of force, especially in the context of demonstrations, and the employment of non-violent means and crowd control, and that the principles of necessity and proportionality are strictly adhered to in practice during the policing of demonstrations.**

Summary of the information received from the State Party

- (a) Following the fatal injury of a police officer during the riots in Yerevan 1 March 2008, the case was referred for pretrial investigation in accordance with article 225 (3) of the Criminal Code (2003). Separately, the internal security and anti-corruption department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs found that the actions of police officers during protests on 23 June 2015 violated professional conduct, resulting in disciplinary measures: two officers were reprimanded, nine were severely reprimanded and one was demoted.

By court ruling in 2017, three officers were found guilty of obstructing journalists and fined 500,000 dram. They were released from police service. Another officer was fined 600,000 dram for related offences, but was not dismissed from military service and no disciplinary action was taken owing to the expiration of the statute of limitations.

In July 2016, after an armed attack on police in Yerevan and reports of police violence against journalists, two investigations relating to internal security and anti-corruption led to disciplinary measures: six officers were reprimanded and seven were severely reprimanded. Criminal proceedings have been launched into press reports of bodily harm caused to journalists by police officers in Yerevan.

In 2018, 11 investigations relating to internal security and anti-corruption were conducted, as a result of which three officers were dismissed after guilty verdicts for obstructing journalists, and nine cases led to no consequences, including one in which the statute of limitations had expired. On 1 March 2019, criminal proceedings were initiated against the former commander of the police, resulting in an indictment, though no final court decision has been issued, and dismissal. Investigations revealed that sonic grenades had been used unlawfully by two identified and two unidentified officers. An amnesty law prevented

prosecution, and disciplinary action was barred due to the expiration of the six-month maximum period under the disciplinary code of the armed forces.

(b) and (c) A new legislative package introduced the concept of the Police Guard, a specialized unit under the police, distinct from the armed forces. The draft law, developed with public and institutional input, is aligned with international standards and the principles upheld by the European Court of Human Rights, particularly regarding freedom of assembly.

The law clearly regulates the use of force by Police Guard officers, detailing permissible methods, conditions and requirements for proportionality. The types of force are listed exhaustively, cases of or situations for their use are presented and general criteria for the selection of type of force and special conditions for the use of each are given. It also outlines officers' duties, rights and training requirements.

To ensure the effective implementation of the right to freedom of assembly, the legislative package also includes a draft law on amendments to the Law on Freedom of Assembly, aimed, in particular, at reducing notification periods for gatherings, removing several restrictions on protest locations and durations and limiting police intervention to cases where less restrictive measures are insufficient.

(d) In September 2023, 13 criminal proceedings were initiated for allegations of the use of disproportionate force by law enforcement authorities during protests by opposition forces, with preliminary investigations still ongoing.

In the spring of 2022, 47 criminal proceedings were initiated for allegations of the use of disproportionate force by law enforcement during protests by opposition forces: of those proceedings, preliminary investigations are still ongoing in 18, 20 have been terminated and 9 have been combined.

The Investigative Committee therefore consistently performs its legal duties by adequately responding to incidents of the use of disproportionate force during protests.

(e) During the period 2021–2024, approximately 349 officers received training from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on topics such as the following: personal rights and freedoms of a person and citizen, guarantees of their implementation and the principle of non-discrimination in the context of human rights protection; the procedure for the use of physical force, firearms and special means by a police officer; restriction of human rights and freedoms by police officers in carrying out their functions; police powers in maintaining public order and ensuring public safety; the Law on Freedom of Assembly; and a study of judgments issued by the European Court of Human Rights regarding violation of article 11 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights).

Summary of the information received from the national human rights institution

In 2024, the Office of the Human Rights Defender identified systemic violations of the right to freedom of assembly, including mass administrative arrests, procedural irregularities and disproportionate use of force by police. A total of 1,107 individuals were arrested during assemblies, with 975 suspected of violating article 182 of the Administrative Offences Code. The legality and justification of these arrests remain questionable.

The Human Rights Defender also documented the use of sonic grenades during protests, resulting in injuries. Although criminal proceedings have been initiated, no police officers have been prosecuted. Additionally, 33 disciplinary investigations were launched, of which 18 have been suspended until the final acts in the criminal proceedings enter into force and 15 remain pending.

Further concerns include obstruction of and violence against journalists, and denial of access to legal assistance for detainees, including minors, in potential violation of article 491 of the Criminal Code.

Despite legislative reforms, including the adoption of the legislation on the Police Guard and amendments to the Law on Freedom of Assembly, enforcement practices continue to undermine the right to freedom of assembly. The Human Rights Defender stresses the need

for transparent oversight of police conduct, public disclosure of special measures used, and continuous training on the lawful use of force.

Criminal cases related to the post-election events on 1 March 2008 and to incidents from 23 February to 2 March 2008, including the illegal use of firearms, have been consolidated into a single investigation. On 5 January 2024, the prosecutor ordered the separation of 10 cases involving torture and abuse of power into new criminal proceedings to ensure a comprehensive examination, safeguard the interests of justice and protect the procedural rights of the individuals affected. Additionally, criminal proceedings were initiated regarding injuries of more than 20 journalists as a result of the use of special measures by the police during the events of July 2015, but were later suspended. In 2021, following the exhaustion of domestic remedies, complaints were submitted on behalf of three journalists to international bodies, including the Human Rights Committee. While progress has been made on the statements and complaints submitted by 104 citizens regarding mistreatment and violence by law enforcement officers, several cases are still pending or no further action has been taken.

Committee's evaluation

[C]: (a)

While welcoming the information provided by the State Party on the investigations and criminal proceedings regarding allegations of excessive use of force by State agents during protests, including the events in March 2008, June 2015, July 2016 and April 2018, the Committee is concerned about the number of cases or proceedings that are still pending or that have concluded with no consequences or criminal sanctions. It also regrets the lack of information on the compensation and rehabilitation provided to victims, and requests information in this regard. The Committee reiterates its recommendations and requests further information on: (a) the progress of the new criminal proceedings ordered by the prosecutor in January 2024 to separate 10 cases involving torture and abuse of power relating to the events of March 2008; (b) the proceedings related to injuries of more than 20 journalists as a result of the use of special measures by the police during the events of July 2015, and the reason for their suspension; and (c) the cases related to the events of March 2008, June 2015, July 2016 and April 2018 that remain pending or for which no further action was taken.

[B]: (b)–(e)

While welcoming the legislative reforms, including the adoption of the legislation on the Police Guard and amendments to the Law on Freedom of Assembly, and the efforts taken to provide training to law enforcement officers on the use of force, the Committee regrets the reports of the continued disproportionate use of force by police and obstruction of and violence against journalists during protests. The Committee reiterates its recommendations in this regard and requests further information on the new legislation, including its impact on the use of force by the police during demonstrations, and information on whether law enforcement officers receive systematic and compulsory training on the prohibition of excessive and unjustified use of force, especially in the context of demonstrations, and the promotion of the employment of non-violent means and crowd control. If further requests information, including statistical data, on any investigations, and the results thereof, into allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention by State agents at protests during the reporting period.

Paragraph 42: Participation in public affairs

The State Party should bring its electoral regulations and practices into full compliance with the Covenant, including its article 25, including by:

(a) Ensuring that the mandatory disclosure of campaign financing information is fully respected to improve transparency and create equal conditions for the campaign;

(b) Revising the limitations on the right to stand for presidential and legislative elections with a view to ensuring their compatibility with the Covenant;

(c) Ensuring full accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities.

Summary of the information received from the State Party

(a) The Electoral Code ensures transparency and accountability throughout the electoral process, including campaign financing. It mandates equal conditions for campaigning and full disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures. Candidates, parties and alliances must submit financial declarations to the Audit and Oversight Service, which conducts reviews and reports findings to the Central Electoral Commission. The Commission must publish these reports immediately and address any violations.

If payments for campaign goods or services are not reported, or if spending exceeds legal limits, administrative penalties of up to three times the unreported or excess amount are imposed. In certain cases, a candidate's or party's registration may be invalidated by court decision. If penalties are not paid or appealed, the Central Electoral Commission may recover the funds through legal action.

(b) The Constitution and the Electoral Code define the mechanisms and procedures for the implementation of the right to elect and to be elected, including mechanisms of restriction and general criteria. The right to be elected may be restricted on two grounds: (a) persons lacking active legal capacity as declared by a civil judgment of a court having entered into force; and (b) persons sentenced by a criminal judgment having entered into force and serving a punishment.

The limitation of a person's legal capacity inevitably leads to a possible restriction of the rights and freedoms of this person in certain legal relations. For this reason, the approach enshrined in the Constitution and Electoral Code is justified and legitimate.

Not all persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities are recognized as "incapacitated"; therefore, legislatively and in practice, persons with disabilities (including intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities) have the right to vote and exercise that right.

Another reason for the deprivation of the right to be elected is the conviction and serving of a punishment under a sentence that has entered into force for any crimes.

The non-nomination of persons as candidates at the time of imprisonment is not a deprivation of the electoral right, but a temporary suspension. When the sentence is complete and the individual is released, the individual will enjoy the right to be elected. As such, the constitutionally fixed restrictions on the right to be elected are justified, meeting the interests of society and complying with the principle of proportionality of fundamental rights and freedoms.

(c) Under article 17 of the Electoral Code, local authorities must ensure that polling stations are accessible to voters with limited mobility or visual impairments. The Central Electoral Commission may set additional accessibility standards, as outlined in its decision No. 17-N of 24 March 2022.

In September 2024, a revised legislative package was submitted to the National Assembly, proposing reforms to enhance electoral transparency, fairness and efficiency. Some of the key reforms include the following:

- Stronger financial oversight of political parties, with distinct mechanisms for election and non-election periods.
- Improved voting access for individuals with mobility impairments, including the option to vote at a more accessible polling station. The application for inclusion in the voter list of an accessible polling station may be submitted electronically.
- Stricter standards for the selection of polling stations, ensuring ease of entry and mobility for persons with disabilities. Certain measures are also planned to facilitate the exercise of voting rights for individuals with visual impairments, ensuring they can fully participate in the electoral process.

Taking into account the rapid development of technologies, the Central Electoral Commission is considering the most up-to-date and effective solutions for voters with visual impairments.

Summary of the information received from the national human rights institution

The Office of the Human Rights Defender notes that there are several systemic barriers to the political and public participation of persons with disabilities in Armenia. These barriers primarily concern: (a) inaccessible election precincts and environmental obstacles, such as lack of ramps and absence of nearby transport and proper road crossings, which hinder independent access to polling stations; (b) inaccessible digital platforms, such as e-draft.am, the website used for public consultations on draft legislation; (c) legal restrictions under article 48 (4) of the Constitution, which deny voting rights to individuals declared by a court to be “incapacitated”; and (d) limited accommodation for persons with mobility impairments during elections.

Comprehensive reforms are required to ensure accessibility in electoral processes, public consultations and infrastructure, including legal amendments, improved monitoring, inclusive construction standards and expanded training and education programmes.

Committee's evaluation

[B]

The Committee welcomes the reforms included in the legislative package submitted to the National Assembly in September 2024 proposing amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code, in particular regarding the implementation of new tools for financial oversight and the measures established to increase the accessibility of polling stations to persons with disabilities. It is, however, concerned about the information indicating that institutional barriers to the political participation of persons with disabilities remain. It regrets that legal restrictions under article 48 (4) of the Constitution remain, denying persons recognized by a court as “incapacitated” the right to elect and to be elected and the right to participate in referendums. The Committee reiterates its recommendations in this regard and requests further information: (a) on whether any administrative proceedings were initiated by the Central Electoral Commission during the reporting period and, if so, whether any violations were found to be substantiated; (b) on any further steps taken to revise eligibility requirements to ensure there are no undue limitations on the right to stand for presidential and legislative elections; and (c) on the progress of the adoption of the legislative package and on the new tools to be implemented.

Recommended action: A letter should be sent informing the State Party of the discontinuation of the follow-up procedure. The information requested should be included in the State Party's next periodic report.

Next periodic report due: 2028 (country review in 2029, in accordance with the predictable review cycle).
