



UPR PRE-SESSION STATEMENT ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ARMENIA

PRESENTED BY: WOMEN'S SUPPORT CENTER, ARMENIA



OVERVIEW

- Armenia's progress and critical gaps in addressing domestic and sexual violence.
- Women's Support Center's perspective and recommendations.

PROGRESS ON UPR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Full implementation of 3 recommendations:
 - Alignment of domestic violence legislation with the Istanbul Convention.
 - Allocation of state resources for survivor rehabilitative services.
- Partial implementation of 4 recommendations:
 - Steps to address trafficking, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment.

UNIMPLEMENTED UPR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- Criminalization of domestic violence as a standalone offense.
- Addressing violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Conducting credible investigations into torture and sexual violence.
- Launching awareness campaigns on reporting mechanisms.

KEY LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS SINCE 3RD UPR CYCLE

- 2020: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs subsidizes domestic violence support centers across all regions.
- 2022: Amendments to the Criminal Code introduce aggravating circumstances for crimes committed by close relatives and criminalize psychological and physical coercion, stalking, and crimes against sexual freedom.
- 2024: Amendments to the domestic violence prevention law and related laws strengthen domestic violence victim protections and increase penalties for perpetrators.

PERSISTENT LEGAL AND SYSTEMIC GAPS

- Domestic violence remains uncriminalized.
- The legal framework lacks recognition of power and control dynamics in domestic violence.
- The government has expressed reservations about the Istanbul Convention's provision on survivor compensation, which would undermine its full implementation.
- Law enforcement and judicial actors prioritize perpetrators' rights over survivor safety.
- Marginalized groups face additional barriers in accessing support.
- Existing legal protections for children in domestic violence situations remain insufficient and inconsistently enforced.
- Armenia lacks a coordinated community response to domestic and sexual violence.
- The initial perpetrator rehabilitation model circulated is not firmly rooted in international best practices and raises several concerns.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARMENIA'S GOVERNMENT

- Ratify the Istanbul Convention without reservations, particularly the provision on survivor compensation, to ensure comprehensive protections (SDG 5.2, 16.3).
- Criminalize domestic violence and recognize coercive control in Armenian law for comprehensive legal protection (SDG 5.2).
- Retain the term "domestic violence" in legal frameworks to align with international standards (SDG 16.3).
- Implement trauma-informed forensic exams by increasing forensic experts, especially female ones, and allowing self-referral (SDG 3.7).
- Strengthen enforcement of protective orders and introduce penalties for violations to enhance victim safety (SDG 16.1).
- Reduce procedural barriers and improve access to justice by eliminating court fees and reducing delays (SDG 16.3).
- Increase the use of alternative measures for perpetrators, such as house arrest or administrative control, to prevent recidivism (SDG 16.1).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARMENIA'S GOVERNMENT

- Ensure strict enforcement of protective orders and hold perpetrators accountable for violations (SDG 16.1).
- Establish protocols for swift arrests of perpetrators and protection of survivors (SDG 16.3).
- Introduce mandatory training for judges, investigators, prosecutors, and forensic experts to ensure a survivor-centered approach (SDG 5.1).
- Expand and improve services for marginalized groups, including displaced women, women with disabilities, LBT women, and ethnic minorities (SDG 10.2).
- Strengthen protections for children in violent situations, ensuring court decisions prioritize children's safety (SDG 16.2).
- Establish an integrated, multi-agency response system with trained professionals and centralized referral pathways to ensure timely and comprehensive support (SDG 16.1, 5.2, 3.7).
- Ensure the planned perpetrator rehabilitation program aligns with international best practices by integrating a structured, evidence-based approach, accountability mechanisms, mandatory participation, and effective monitoring (SDG 5.2, 16.3).