





Joint Report to the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls

(Special Procedure of the UN Human Rights Council)

# TOPIC: Systemic discrimination against transgender women and gender diverse people in Armenia, in particular:

- Gender legal recognition gaps,
- Access to trans-competent and sensitive health services,
- Protection from gender-based violence.

# **REPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:**

National Trans Coalition human rights NGO (NTC) is an innovative partnership, founded on November 16, 2019, the International Day for

Tolerance, which leads and inspires all administrative regions of Armenia to achieve

- 1) Trans community building in Armenia,
- 2) Trans human rights and gender advocacy,
- 3) Gender mainstreaming of Trans communities based on intersectoral approaches.

NTC also works in areas such as justice, peacebuilding, LGBT+ movement, etc.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO (RS) is the first and leading community-based organization for Trans and sex worker communities in Armenia and the region. The organization was founded on 25 January 2016 by Trans activists and has since focused its efforts on protecting the rights and health of the Trans, LGBIQ, and sex worker communities, advocating for policy reform, and increasing community visibility and mobilization.

The organization provides community members with legal and psychological services, small grants, educational opportunities, and crisis social support.



rightsidengo@gmail.com,

+374 11 880 770

https://www.instagram.com/ntcarmenia/

ntcoalition.ngo@gmail.com

+374 94 466 420

This report was prepared with the financial support of Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE). The content of the document is the responsibility of the human rights NGOs National Trans Coalition and Right Side and does not necessarily reflect the views of GATE. The authors of the document are not responsible for the use and interpretation of the data presented in this report by third parties.

# **REPORT AUTHORS:**

Lilit Martirosyan & Hmayak Avetisyan

# 1. KEY FINDINGS

- There is no system for legal gender recognition.
- No comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation exists.
- Trans-competent healthcare is not available in Armenia.
- There is inadequate response to violence and hate-motivated crimes.
- Trans women and gender diverse face layered and intersectoral discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, sex work, HIV status, and socioeconomic vulnerability.

# 2. INTRODUCTION

Trans women and gender diverse individuals in Armenia face deep-rooted and systemic discrimination at the legislative level and in practice. Legal gender recognition remains inaccessible in practice. Healthcare for trans women is not competent and sensitive, is not regulated by law, and is inaccessible in practice. Protection from gender-based violence is inadequate, and gender-based hate speech and actions are not adequately addressed by relevant authorities.

Representatives of the NTC and the RS participated in the 49th session of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) held in Geneva from 18–21 February 2025. They made public statements presenting the challenges facing trans and LGBTIQ+ individuals in Armenia and the urgency of legislative changes. In her speech, Lilit Martirosyan, Founding President of the RS, emphasized that the country lacks clear legal mechanisms that would protect trans and LGBTIQ+ people from hate crimes, discrimination, and hate speech. She also touched upon the lack of a system of legal recognition of gender identity, as well as the inaccessibility of healthcare services for trans people. Representatives of partner NGOs emphasized the need to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, with wording that would clearly include protection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. They called for launching public awareness campaigns and educational reforms aimed at overcoming stereotypes and promoting inclusivity. In their speeches, they also emphasized the importance of ensuring access to justice for trans people, proposing concrete solutions, including the full realization of the rights of peaceful assembly and legal recognition of gender.

On May 1, 2025, Armenia participated in the fourth round of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council, presenting the progress made in the protection of human rights in the country and the challenges it faces. The Armenian delegation consisted of high-ranking representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Labor and Social Affairs, Health, and other departments. During the dialogue, representatives from 26 States made a clear call on Armenia to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which would include protection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. At the same time, a number of States proposed to:

- Ratify the Istanbul Convention to prevent and combat violence against women.
- Strengthen judicial independence.
- Expand legal mechanisms for the protection of LGBTIQ+ persons in the fight against hate speech and crimes.
- Guarantee the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

The Armenian delegation, in its closing remarks, welcomed the observations and recommendations made by international partners, reaffirming the country's readiness to continue reforms in the field of human rights, guided by the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and universal values.

# 2. METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods, participatory and rights-based approaches were employed to compile this report, which combined desk review of existing documents, community consultations, stakeholder engagement, and legal analyses. The data were collected between August and September 2025.

#### 1) Desk review

- Analysis of the legal framework and existing policies and regulations in Armenia related to gender equality, legal recognition of gender, access to healthcare, and protection from gender-based violence.
- Review of previous reports submitted to UN treaty bodies and special procedures (UN Universal Periodic Report, CEDAW Committee, etc.) to understand gaps, progress, and recurring recommendations.
- Review of Armenia's international commitments.

#### 2) Community consultations

- Group and individual consultations with 24 trans women and gender diverse individuals, ensuring inclusiveness and diversity among participants (age, geography, social status, and other cross-cutting factors). Voluntary participation and confidentiality were ensured.
- Online surveys with 86 trans women and gender diverse individuals, focusing on their personal experiences of systemic discrimination, particularly in the areas of legal gender recognition, healthcare, and violence. Voluntary participation and confidentiality were ensured.

- 3) Stakeholder engagement
- Online or face-to-face interviews with 12 stakeholders, including health experts, decision-makers, legal experts, psychologists, and human rights defenders, to identify existing barriers.

# 3.LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND EXISTING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS IN ARMENIA RELATED TO GENDER EQUALITY, LEGAL RECOGNITION OF GENDER, ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE, AND PROTECTION FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

# 3.1 LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION (LGR)

In Armenia, clear and accessible regulations on legal gender recognition are still absent. In practice, trans women and gender-diverse individuals are forced to resort to non-transparent and discriminatory mechanisms: changes to passport information are only possible after gender-affirming surgery, which is neither required nor defined by law, yet is defacto demanded by the Civil Status Registration Agency.

This situation contradicts international standards repeatedly emphasized by the UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR), the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR), and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which highlight that legal gender recognition must be quick, transparent, accessible, and free from mandatory medical interventions.

The absence of legal gender recognition leads to employment discrimination, exclusion from education and social services, and non-recognition of identity by the State.

NTC and RS annually document hundreds of violations of trans individuals' rights related to legal gender recognition, which are compiled into reports and used for advocacy purposes. Furthermore, within the framework of strategic litigation, RS has filed a legal claim against the Civil Status Registration Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Armenia on behalf of its beneficiary, NTC President Camelia Kandiliani, demanding that the gender marker in official documents be changed to "female."

Monitoring conducted by international organizations such as ILGA-Europe and TGEU also confirms that in Armenia, legal gender recognition is, in practice, impossible to exercise. This results in significant limitations for trans women and gender-diverse individuals in terms of access to services, employment opportunities, and security guarantees.

#### 3.2 ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIMES

Despite the general principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution of Armenia, there are currently no comprehensive anti-discrimination or hate-crime laws that explicitly include gender identity and sexual orientation

#### TRANS WOMEN REGULARLY FACE:

- spread of hate speech in the media and social networks,
- denial of essential services such as healthcare, banking, housing,
- Incidents of physical and psychological violence,
- Police inaction and neutral or inadequate responses

During community consultations, participants noted that most cases of violence go unreported due to a lack of trust in the police and fear of facing double discrimination.

NTC and RS document hundreds of hate-motivated incidents targeting trans women and gender-diverse individuals, as well as cases of police inaction, biased, prejudiced, and discriminatory attitudes. Tragically, alongside numerous incidents of violence and crimes against trans women and gender-diverse individuals, cases of (self)murder of trans women have been recorded in Armenia.

# 3.3 GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE

Gender affirming healthcare is practically unavailable in Armenia. The main obstacles include:

- Lack of trans-competent specialists: medical professionals do not receive adequate training.
- Inaccessibility of hormonal therapy: it is not available within the public healthcare system and is mostly obtained through informal channels and the black market.
- Absence of surgeries: gender-affirming surgeries are not performed in Armenia.

During community consultations, trans women and gender-diverse individuals also shared experiences of discriminatory treatment by healthcare providers, including intrusive personal questions, offensive remarks, and refusals to provide services.

In its report submitted to the UN periodic review, RS presented several cases in which trans women were denied medical services or faced discriminatory treatment due to discrepancies between their documents and their appearance. In its submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, NTC outlined the systemic barriers that hinder trans women and gender-diverse individuals' access to healthcare services.

# 4.SITUATION IN PRACTICE: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANS WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS

Data collected through community consultations (24 participants) and online surveys (86 participants) reveal that trans women and gender-diverse individuals in Armenia continue to face deep and multidimensional discrimination in all areas of life.

Among the respondents, approximately 65% identified as trans women, and 35% as non-binary or gender-diverse individuals. Participants represented both urban and rural areas, with the majority residing in Yerevan and other major cities such as Gyumri and Vanadzor, and a smaller number from regional and border communities.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants (about 70%) were between 18 and 35 years old, while 25% were aged 36–50, and 5% were over 50.

This demographic and geographical diversity contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the varied experiences, challenges, and forms of discrimination faced by trans and gender-diverse individuals across Armenia.

# 4.1 VIOLENCE, THREATS AND IMPUNITY

- Around 68% of participants reported having experienced physical or psychological violence at least once because of their gender identity.
- 52% mentioned rejection and violence within their families, including attempts at "conversion therapy" or being locked at home. "When I told my family that I am a woman, my father locked me at home for a week and took away my phone so I couldn't talk to anyone", trans woman, 23, from Shirak region.
- There were frequent reports not only of police inaction but also of transphobic attitudes: several participants stated that police of-ficers mocked their appearance and refused to open a case.

"At the police station, they told me, 'It's your own fault: if you dress like that, anyone would beat you", - a trans woman, 30, from Lori region

https://rightsidengo.com/en/our-publication/iravakan-zekvouyc-2024

### 4.2 CONSEQUENCES OF THE LACK OF LEGAL RECOGNITION OF GENDER

- The overwhelming majority of participants (92%) indicated that the mismatch between their documents and appearance is a primary cause of daily discrimination.
- 67% reported facing difficulties when applying for jobs: employers either openly reject them or pressure them to "look normal." Some have not even attempted to apply for work.
- In educational institutions, students shared experiences of stigma; during their studies, they were often forced to explain their documents or endure ridicule.
- "The lecturer read out my passport information aloud in front of the whole class afterwards, I was mocked for months", a trans women, 21, from Aragatsotn region
- In public services (banks, post offices, tax authorities), trans women frequently encounter situations where their name and gender marker do not match their gender identities, leading to stigma and denial of services.

#### 4.3 DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTHCARE

• 71% of participants reported experiencing negative attitudes from doctors at some point in their lives, including insults, discrimination, disclosure of personal information, and denial of services.

"The doctor refused to see me and said, "I don't treat patients like you", - a gender diverse person, 28, from Yerevan

- Gender-affirming care is not available in Armenia: almost all participants stated that they were forced to take medication based on friends' advice or consult endocrinologists abroad, without any medical supervision.
- "I buy hormones from semi-secret sources. There's no doctor to guide me, and I'm always afraid I'll harm my health", a trans woman, 25, from Yerevan
- 34% said they avoid seeking medical assistance out of fear of stigmatizing attitudes.
- In some cases, healthcare providers disclosed personal information to third parties, violating the participants' right to confidentiality.

### 4.4 INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION: SEX WORK, HIV, SOCIAL STATUS

• During community consultations, it was particularly emphasized that a significant portion of trans women and gender-diverse individuals engage in sex work due to the impossibility of accessing other employment. This makes them doubly vulnerable—both to social stigma and targeting by law enforcement.

"I wouldn't choose sex work if I had other options, but my appearance doesn't allow me to get a job", - a trans woman, 42, from Yerevan

- Sex worker trans women reported frequent violence, often perpetrated by police. 40% stated that when they sought protection from law enforcement, they became victims of double discrimination.
- "When the police saw me being assaulted on the street, they didn't protect me; they mocked me", a trans woman, 33, from Yerevan
- Trans women living with HIV face additional discrimination, particularly in community health facilities; in some cases, they were "blamed" for their identity and health status.
- "My surgery date was already scheduled, but when they learned about my HIV status, they said they don't perform such surgeries here", a trans woman, 30, from Armavir region
- Socioeconomic difficulties exacerbate isolation: many participants noted the impossibility of renting housing due to document mismatches and discrepancies between appearance and identity.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

#### LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

- Develop and adopt a clear and transparent legal framework for legal gender recognition based on the principle of self-determination.
- Remove any medical requirement, including gender-affirming surgery, hormone replacement therapy, psychiatric reports, etc. as a prerequisite for legal gender recognition.

#### PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION

- Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly includes gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention.
- Strengthen the capacity of the police and prosecution authorities by specialized training programs and the adoption of internal policies and guidelines to investigate and ensure accountability for hate-motivated crimes.
- Develop public awareness campaigns aimed at overcoming stereotypes against trans and gender-diverse individuals.
- Establish a dedicated state body to review complaints related to discrimination.
- Amend the Criminal Code to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds against hate speech and hate crimes.
- Provide training and adopt guidelines for judges on identifying and responding to hate speech and hate-motivated crimes.

#### **HEALTHCARE**

- Establish and fund trans-competent healthcare services, including hormonal therapy and psychological support.
- Adopt and implement ICD-11 and eliminate the pathologization of trans identities.
- Include gender-affirming surgery in the list of medical services and streamline the procedures for access.

# 6.PRIORITY QUESTIONS FOR THE UN WORKING GROUP ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS TO RAISE BEFORE THE RA GOVERNMENT

- How and when does Armenia plan to implement a legal gender recognition procedure?
- When does Armenia plan to introduce comprehensive anti-discrimination and hate crime legislation that includes sexual orientation and gender identity?
- What steps are being taken to ensure effective investigation of cases of violence against trans women and gender diverse people?
- When does the Ministry of Health plan to introduce trans-competent healthcare services?
- What measures will be taken to combat hate speech and discrimination in society?

#### 7. REFERENCES

#### **APPENDIX 1. LIST OF SOURCES USED**

- Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (as amended in 2015)
- Law of the Republic of Armenia on Civil Status Acts
- Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia
- Armenia's periodic and shadow reports to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Armenia's reports (state and shadow) under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
- Shadow reports and public statements by NTC and ECOM
- Statements by UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteurs on trans individuals

#### **APPENDIX 2. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS**

- Community consultations guidelines
- Online survey questionnaire
- Expert interview questionnaire
- Consent form for recording for research purposes