

Information submitted by the Government of Azerbaijan
on violence against women, its causes and consequences with regard the request by the
Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

2. “Investigation on the basis of appeals addressed to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs within the framework of monitoring the prevalence and causes of domestic violence” and “Access to justice for victims of domestic violence: Current situation and ways to improve it” was conducted by the independent expert in 2021 with the request of the State Committee. The study provides detailed information on the causes, physical and psychological consequences of violence, ways to improve legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent domestic violence, as well as access to justice for victims of violence.

3. The 2020-2023 National Action Plan (NAP) on the Prevention of Domestic Violence was approved under Decree #2307, dated November 27th, 2020, of the President of Republic of Azerbaijan. Part I of the Decree identifies the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs as the coordinating authority for the implementation of NAP-specified measures. Pursuant to Part II of the Decree, the Committee shall annually give a report on NAP progress to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. NAP specifies measures in the following seven areas: refinement of the regulatory framework for combatting domestic violence, violence prevention advocacy, cooperation in the field of combatting domestic violence, provision of victims with care centers and shelters, detection and early identification of victims of violence, development of professional staff and the system for the effective protection of victims of domestic violence.

The first area of NAP activity covers the refinement of the regulatory framework for the prevention of domestic violence, establishment of interagency coordination mechanism for victims of domestic violence, and improvement of the current legislation to provide free-of-charge legal assistance for victims of domestic violence. Work is currently underway to draft the corresponding documents. Meanwhile, pursuant to NAP, new Regulations were designed to govern the activity of monitoring groups for gender-based violence and violence against children, composed of representatives of relevant local executive authority in accordance with the corresponding order issued by the head of the executive authority thereof.

To make arrangements for the implementation of NAP-specified measures, a hotline ‘860’ has been launched to accept calls on grounds of domestic violence, in the framework of cooperation between the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and is operational since December 1st, 2020.

There are 10 non-governmental organizations that have undergone accreditation to provide social services for victims of domestic violence. These NGOs are primarily confined to Baku, Ganja, and Sumgayit, the three biggest cities of Azerbaijan. In addition, a shelter for vulnerable populations operates under the Ministry for Labor and Social Protection of the Population.

In the framework of combatting domestic violence, Commissions for gender issues and combatting domestic violence started operating under all (10) municipal institutions of one administrative

district of Baku, the capital city, to identify families at risk and carry out outreach work/preventive measures with them, and provide necessary psychological and legal assistance for victims of violence. Special boxes were placed in the administrative buildings of the above-mentioned municipal institutions, so that a victim of domestic violence, a person in their respective capacity as a witness of a similar event, who fail to give a timely report on such cases to competent authorities, can visit the municipal institutions in the area in which they reside and to drop a written complaint (letter) into the boxes in question. The Commission collaborates with the Monitoring Group for Gender-based Violence and Violence against Children, operating under the Executive Authority, and other competent authorities on investigating the complaints and other requests, and taking subsequent action.

In 2020, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs launched the EU-funded Twinning project Strengthening the capacity of the State Bodies and local level referral mechanisms to provide safety and support to the victims of domestic violence, with Lithuania and Austria acting as senior and junior project partners, respectfully.

In the framework of the project, a training course was conducted for the staff of law-enforcement and prosecution authorities and health sector, since May 17th through 21st, 2021, to contribute to better provision of help for victims of violence and effective treatment and rehabilitation work with perpetrators. Furthermore, the project organized training courses Domestic violence indicators, referral guidelines, and risk assessment for judges in 65 administrative districts and cities/towns, and produced four manuals on the following topics:

- Domestic violence indicators, referral guidelines, and risk assessment tools;
- Treatment of women's rights and domestic violence cases in compliance with European standards;
- Mass media campaigns to improve perception of gender equality among and disseminate gender-based violence data to journalists covering domestic violence issues;
- On the elimination of domestic violence: how can social relations and behavioral patterns change?

5. There were 14,975 reported cases of crime against women over the past two years and nine months (5,706 cases in 2019, plus 5,176 in 2020, and 4,093 in January-September 2021), including 6,091 cases implying violence against women (2,269 in 2019, plus 2,067 in 2020, and 1,755 in January-September 2021). Consequently, 6,834 perpetrators were put on trial (2,480 in 2019, plus 2,414 in 2020, and 1,940 in January-September 2021). Overall, 2,955 crimes were committed on grounds of jealousy, family conflict and other domestic issues (1,026 in 2019, plus 973 in 2020, and 956 in January-September 2021).

In the course of professional development courses for the staff of internal affairs authority as well as educational and training courses for them at special schools, a particular attention was paid to the study and gaining experience in the field of practical aspects of human rights and freedoms involving the specifics of behavioral patterns of sexual minorities, victims of human trafficking

and other vulnerable populations, and the techniques for the protection of those people, and the provisions enshrined in the relevant international legal tools and national legislation. Meanwhile, booklets, leaflets and other visual aids on relevant topics are prepared and disseminated to the staff of internal affairs authority.

Police officers are sent to training courses in different foreign countries, by the Council of Europe, OSCE, and other international organizations, with the purpose to improve activity in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms and introduce the corresponding international practice in Azerbaijan. In addition, Azerbaijan hosts seminars, workshops, training courses and conferences that are attended by international experts. Over the past two years, a total of 1,403 police officers were involved in training courses and exchange of experience programs on human rights, including gender equality, provision of legal assistance to vulnerable populations, and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

Armenia's next aggression attempt against Azerbaijan last year severely affected the lives of hundreds of thousands people in Azerbaijan, in particular women. As the result of Armenia's deliberate military attack on civilian population and civilian infrastructure 29 women and 12 children were killed, 101 women and 50 children were wounded. Besides, extensive damage was inflicted on houses and other residential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals. As women constitute also important part of medical personnel, especially nurses, their lives were under serious danger as a result of indiscriminate shelling of civilian and medical objects by Armenian forces. Azerbaijani nurse Arasta Bakhishova who was killed during the war last year was posthumously awarded ICRC's Florence Nightingale Medal in 2021.