

## **INFORMATION**

**of the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan on implementing 46<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council entitled “Anti-Muslim hatred/ “Islamophobia” and the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief” regarding Azerbaijan**

### **1. Muslims within the State**

What part of the population within your jurisdiction identify as Muslim? Are there multiple Muslim groups within your State?

**About 96% of the population of Azerbaijan are Muslims, the rest are representatives of other religions. 945 religious communities have been registered so far. Thus, 909 of them are Muslim and 36 are non-Islamic religious communities.**

### **2. The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion or Belief**

- a) Does the State recognise the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief of all persons regardless of one’s race, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, religion or belief? What steps does the State take to promote respect for the right of all persons, including Muslims, to the equal enjoyment of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief? What are the protections provided in law and practice against coercion in matters of faith and belief, including in the right to have, adopt or change one’s religious or non-religious beliefs?

**Taking into account the existing religious diversity in society, religious policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan is based on freedom of thought and speech, freedom of conscience, inter-religious dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding. At the same time, the state’s religious policy is based on the principles and norms of international law, international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party, the country's Constitution and other normative legal acts. According to Article 25, Paragraph III of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, “The State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms to everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs or affiliation with political parties, trade union organizations or other public associations. Restrictions of rights and freedoms on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, beliefs, or political or**

social affiliation are prohibited.” As mentioned in the article of the Constitution, every citizen of the Azerbaijan Republic has the same rights regardless of whether they are members of a national or religious minority. Regulation of state-religion relations in the Republic of Azerbaijan is governed by Article 18 (“State and religion”), Article 25 (“Right to equality”), 47 (“Freedom of thought and speech”), Article 48 (“Freedom of conscience”), Article 49 (“Freedom of Assembly”) and Article 71 (“Guarantees for rights and freedoms of man and citizen ”). In addition, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Freedom of Religion” is the main legal and regulatory framework in determining the status, rights and responsibilities of religious organizations and regulates relations arising in connection with the activities of religious entities.

b) Does the State restrict the right of Muslims to manifest their freedom of religion or belief?

Establishment and activity of religious organizations in the Republic of Azerbaijan are regulated by the relevant articles of the Law on Freedom of Religious Belief. Thus, Articles 8 and 9 of the Law state that Islamic religious communities shall subordinate to the Caucasus Muslim Department in organizational issues in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and non-Islamic religious communities shall have the right to become subordinate to the religion centers (departments) acting in the Republic of Azerbaijan and abroad, and change the subordination. The priests, governing the places of public liturgy belonging to the Islamic religion are appointed by the Caucasus Muslim Board with the notification of relevant executive authorities.

- i. Worship or assembly in connection with a religion or belief in public or in private, alone or in community with others;
- ii. write, issue and disseminate publications offline and online material related to the rites, customs and teachings of Islam;
- iii. observe practices related to the religious slaughter of animals; import halal meat or observe dietary requirements mandated by religious beliefs;
- iv. display religious symbols, forms of dress and other personal representations of religious beliefs;
- v. establish and register religious organisations, charities or humanitarian institutions;
- vi. train and appoint clergy without intervention;
- vii. exercise parental liberties regarding religious education of Muslim children;
- viii. observe holidays or days of rest in accordance with the Islamic faith.
- ix. establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts with other members of their groups and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by religious ties;

- x. freedom of movement both within the country and across borders including for purpose of learning and pilgrimage.

Islamic religious institutions in Azerbaijan Republic shall unite in their historical Islam center - the Caucasus Muslim Board. Non-Islamic religious institutions having their organizational centers abroad in their activity may guide the charters of those centers to the extent not contradicting the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The relations of the state with religious centers and departments, including the religious centers and departments operating beyond the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which are not regulated by law, shall be regulated among themselves and pursuant to the approval of the state bodies.

Article 22 of the same law states that Citizens and religious institutions are entitled to purchase literature (on paper and electronic media), audio and video materials, articles and items of religious purpose and other religious information materials, marked with holographic sticker, issued by the relevant executive authority, in the desired language and use them. The religious institutions, other legal and physical entities, which are not religious institutions may, with permission of the relevant executive authority, to manufacture, import, export and after marking with holographic sticker, freely distribute literature (on paper and electronic media), audio and video materials, goods and items of religious purposes and other informational materials of religious content. Sale of literature (on paper and electronic media), audio and video materials, articles and items of religious purposes and other informational materials of religious content, marked with holographic sticker, shall be carried out only in specialized points of sale, formed with permission of the relevant executive authority.

The state has created appropriate conditions for the celebration of significant religious ceremonies at a high level by Muslim and non-Muslim communities operating in the country. Thus, every year, Muslims celebrate Ramadan, Eid al-Adha and Muharram at a high level.

- c) Are there restrictions on the construction, maintenance and use of places of worship by Muslims in your State? Have there been any attacks on Muslim places of worship within your jurisdiction?

The state does not impose any restrictions on the construction, protection and use of places of worship by Muslims. It should be noted that Azerbaijan is one of the few countries in the world that separation of mosques by sects is not allowed. In general, places of worship of all religions have historically been respected in Azerbaijan and the repair, restoration and construction of religious temples regularly has supported at the state level.

However, as a result of the Armenian occupation of up to 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory for about 30 years, many places of worship, especially Islamic religious monuments, have been vandalized by Armenians, destroyed, mosques have been turned into animal stables or Armenianized. There are 403 historical and religious monuments in the occupied territories, including 67 mosques, 144 temples (including Albanian churches) and 192 sanctuaries.

d) Are there any Islamic cultural sites in your country? Does the State support the preservation of these sites?

At present, there are more than 2,250 mosques and 500 shrines in Azerbaijan. All places of worship regardless of their religious affiliations, as well as places of Muslim worship, are protected by the state and their security is fully ensured.

e) Are there any places of Islamic education (madrasas/ schools or universities) in your country? If so, are they accredited, recognised or funded by the State? Are Quran classes allowed in places of Muslim worship or other religious institutions?

According to Article 10 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief", Religious educational institutions on training of ministers of religion and other ministers on religious specialties may be established only by religious centers and departments. Religious centers and departments can establish only one high educational religious institution. Relations between religious educational institutions and religious centers or departments shall be determined by the constituent documents. Religious schools operate under a special permit (license) issued by the relevant executive authority in the manner prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Students of religious educational institutions shall use the rights and concessions determined for the students of the state educational institutions.

According to President's Order No 3654 dated 9 February 2018, in order to ensure the preservation and development of a high religious and spiritual environment based on the historical traditions of the Azerbaijani people and the logical result of state policy, the training of highly qualified personnel in the organization of religious activities The Azerbaijan Theological Institute was established under the auspices of the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijan Theological Institute is the only state higher education institution at all levels of education in the field of religion (bachelor's, master's and doctoral) operating under the auspices of the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Also, since 2017, 10 Islamic colleges are registered in the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. These are Zagatala Islamic College, Ganja Islamic College, Lankaran Islamic College, Guba Islamic College, Heydar Islamic College, Nardaran Islamic College, Bibiheybat Islamic College, Sheki (Hafizlik) Islamic College, Aliabad Islamic College and Shabnam (Girls) Islamic College.

As the next step forward in the training of national religious personnel in the country, it is planned to systematically teach Azerbaijan history, national roots, tolerant inter-religious relations, multicultural and Islamic unity.

### 3. Equality and Non-Discrimination

- a) Please provide information and data on the prevalence and types of inequality and discrimination, reportedly experienced by Muslims in your country, including from a gender perspective.

**These cases have not been registered in our country, as Azerbaijan has historically been a society rich in multicultural and tolerant traditions, and the state has pursued a policy to strengthen these traditions.**

- b) Please provide information on domestic laws (including relevant domestically implemented international law), policies, and practices that protect against or respond to discrimination against Muslims. How do you ensure the deradicalization programme, counter-terrorism and/or preventing extremism measures or legislations do not target any specific religious or ethnic group, including Muslims?

**Regulation of state-religion relations in the Republic of Azerbaijan is governed by Article 18 ("State and religion"), Article 25 ("Right to equality"), 47 ("Freedom of thought and speech"), Article 48("Freedom of conscience"), Article 49 ("Freedom of Assembly") and Article 71 ("Guarantees for rights and freedoms of man and citizen"). In addition, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religion" is the main legal and regulatory framework in determining the status, rights and responsibilities of religious organizations and regulates relations arising in connection with the activities of religious entities. Also, the Law on "Combating Religious Extremism", the Code of Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which define the legal and organizational basis for combating religious extremism, can be considered legal and regulatory documents related to this area.**

- c) Please provide information on specific gaps and challenges with regard to the elimination of discrimination against Muslims. Are there recent examples where the State has amended or rescinded legislation in order to combat discrimination against Muslims? Do laws in your country guarantee equal rights, regardless of religion or belief, in terms of access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment?

No cases of discrimination on the basis of religion or belief were registered in the country.

In our country, the laws provide equal rights in terms of education, health, housing and employment, regardless of religion.

According to provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

25 Article:

I. All people are equal with respect to the law and law court.

II. Men and women possess equal rights and liberties.

III. Everyone has equal rights and liberties irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, origin, property status, social position, convictions, political party, trade union organization and social unity affiliation. Limitations or recognition of rights and liberties because of race, ethnicity, social status, language, origin, convictions and religion are prohibited.

IV. No one may be harmed, granted advantages or privileges, or deprived from granting advantages and privileges on the basis of the abovementioned grounds.

Article 35. Right to work

II. Everyone has the right to choose independently, based on his/her abilities, kind of activity, profession, occupation and place of work.

Article 41. Right for protection of health

I. Everyone has the right for protection of his/her health and for medical care.

Article 42. Right for education

I. Every citizen has the right for education.

II. The state guarantees free obligatory secondary education.

Article 43. Right for home

I. Nobody might be deprived of his/her home.

In addition according to Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan Republic:

Article 16. Unacceptability of Discrimination in Labor Relations

1. During hiring or a change in or termination of employment no discrimination among

employees shall be permitted on the basis of citizenship, sex, race, nationality, language,

place of residence, economic standing, social origin, age, family circumstances, religion,

political views, affiliation with trade unions or other public associations, professional

standing, beliefs, or other factors unrelated to the professional qualifications, job performance, or professional skills of the employees, nor shall it be permitted to establish

privileges and benefits or directly or indirectly limit rights on the basis of these factors.

d) Are Muslims treated differently in their applications for asylum and citizenship?

According to Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan, citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan is equal for all, regardless of the grounds for its acquisition.

The rights, freedoms and responsibilities of the citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic depend on their origin, social and property status, race and nationality, sex, education, language, religion, political and other beliefs, type and nature of occupation, place of residence, period of residence and other circumstances. equal regardless.

According to Article 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with generally accepted norms of international law, the Republic of Azerbaijan provides political asylum to foreigners and stateless persons.

The Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan states:

**64.0.15. Persons who have applied for refugee status, have been granted refugee status or have been granted political asylum are not required to obtain a work permit.**

e) How does the State protect Muslims in potentially vulnerable situations such as (i) refugees and migrants (ii) children (iii) girls, women, and LGBT+persons (iv) persons with disabilities (v) members of recognised and unrecognised minority Muslim sects, Muslims perceived to be secular or Muslims who converted into other religions or become atheists and (v) Muslims in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state of Azerbaijan, regardless of social and property status, race and nationality, sex, education, language, religion, political and other beliefs, type and nature of occupation, place of residence, period of residence and other circumstances, as in any case, also protects the safety of all citizens.

f) Representation and participation in public life: Are there Muslims in the Government and the judiciary? Are Muslims represented in other public affairs or institutions, including legislative and equality bodies such as National Human Rights Institutions?

**As the majority of the country is Muslim, Muslims are actively involved in all areas.**

- g) **Hate speech by politicians:** Does the State have a parliamentary or legislative code of conduct to deter politicians from making anti-Muslim, antisemitic, xenophobic, racist, homophobic, or other hateful remarks from the floor or in public appearances? Is there qualified or parliamentary immunity for hate speech?

**These issues are the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Code of Administrative Offenses, the rules of ethical conduct of deputies of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the rules of ethical conduct of civil servants, etc. It is regulated by the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan.**

- h) **Online hate speech:** Does the State monitor and investigate incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination online, including perpetrators' tools and tactics (e.g. use of bots, doxing, misinformation)? What data does the State have on how online hatred, harassment and political manipulation are affecting Muslims? Does the State have arrangements with private actors (e.g. social media companies) to access their data on the incidence or effect of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination online on those targeted?

**Nowadays, there are not observed any cases of hatred and online discrimination against Muslims in Azerbaijan, as well as the tools and tactics of criminals. The first reason is that the majority of the country's population considers themselves culturally Muslim. Another reason is that religious groups in the country have a very weak social base to influence the political process. The vast majority of influential political parties and organizations operating in Azerbaijan are secular. Their political platform presents religion as an integral part of human rights and freedoms.**

- i) **Incitement to hatred or violence:** How is the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred in international human rights law incorporated into domestic legislation? Are there specific offences in law regarding crimes of anti-Muslim hatred? Do the laws provide for imposition of enhanced penalties for crimes committed with anti-Muslim motivation? Is there a law on "takfirism"?

**According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**On freedom of religious beliefs:**

**Article 1. Freedom of Religious Belief**

**Everyone has the right to profess individually or jointly with others any religion, to express and disseminate his opinions in connection with the attitude to religion.**



It is prohibited to put any obstacles to the expression by any person of his religion, his participation in worship, religious rites and ceremonies or the study of religion. Nobody can be forced to expression (demonstration) of his religion, performance of religious ceremonies or participation in them. Propaganda of religion and religious ways of life through the use of force or threat of force, as well as incitement to racial, ethnic, religious, social animosity and hostility are prohibited. The dissemination and promotion of religions (sects), humiliating humans dignity or contradicting the principles of humanity is not allowed. And all these provisions in a line with international law

According to 61 Article of Criminal Code Of The Azerbaijan Republic, commitment of a crime on grounds of national, racial, religious hatred or fanaticism, is considered an aggravating circumstance. In addition, there is the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Combating Religious Extremism in Azerbaijan.

- j) Countering Violent Extremism: Are State strategies and practices to prevent/counter violent extremism grounded in human rights law? How does the State define "violent extremism"? Are the impacts on women and ethnic and religious groups on rights-limiting measures assessed?

Cases of violent extremism are defined by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Combating Religious Extremism. 1.0.1. Of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Combating Religious Extremism. According to the article, religious extremism (religious extremist activity) - on the basis of religious enmity, religious radicalism or religious fanaticism:

- 1.0.1.1. The constitutional structure of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including its forcible change of secular character or fragmentation of territorial integrity, or committing acts of forcible seizure of power;
- 1.0.1.2. establishment of illegal armed formations or groups, and or participation in groups;
- 1.0.1.3. carrying out terrorist activities;
- 1.0.1.4. In armed conflicts outside the Republic of Azerbaijan participation;

**1.0.1.5. incitement to national, social or religious hatred, humiliation of national dignity, national, racial,**

**the rights of citizens depending on their social or religious affiliation**

**actions aimed at limiting or determining preferences committing;**

**1.0.1.6. to practice any religion (religious movement) of the person, including religious rites and to perform ceremonies or participate in religious rites and ceremonies, as well as religious compulsion to study;**

**1.0.1.7. actions provided for in Articles 1.0.1.1 - 1.0.1.5 of this Law making public calls to commit;**

**1.0.1.8. to carry out religious extremist materials, ie religious extremist activities calling or justifying such activity, or justifying the necessity of such activity preparation, storage or distribution of earning materials;**

**1.0.1.9. activities to finance religious extremism.**

**Rights may be restricted in cases provided by law, regardless of ethnic, gender or religious affiliation.**

**k) Reporting, documenting and remedy:**

**l) Is there a specific State mechanism for reporting or recording incidents of anti-Muslim hatred or discrimination? Does the State take other measures to improve monitoring increase reporting and the documenting of such crimes? Is the number of such incidents rising or falling?**

**There is no cases of hatred and discrimination on religious grounds were observed in Azerbaijan.**

**ii. Do you collect information on who the perpetrators of hate crimes are? If so, who are they and what are the common motives?**

**According to Part 3 of Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, gaining, storing, using and spreading information about the person's private life without his/her consent is not permitted. The collection, storage, use and dissemination of information concerning a person's private life is not permitted without his consent. Based on the above, we state that no information is collected on the identity of the perpetrators of hate crimes.**

**iii. If applicable, what percentage of prosecutions of hate crimes in which Muslim identity was an aggravating factor are successful? How does the State ensure that victims of anti-Muslim hate speech, crimes or discrimination are provided with effective access to**

justice and remedies, including Muslim women and girls (e.g. does the State fund programme to help victims)?

**No cases of hatred and discrimination on religious grounds were observed in Azerbaijan.**

- iv. Does the State provide security for Muslim schools or cultural sites (if so, please elaborate)? Are Muslims allowed to form community security groups? Are there cases of anti-Muslim violence, harassment, or desecration targeting individuals or their property, educational facilities or Muslim cultural or religious sites (if so, please provide details)?

**Regardless of religion, monuments and places of worship in Azerbaijan are fully protected by the state and their security is guaranteed by the state. No cases of persecution or violence on religious grounds have been registered in Azerbaijan, either individually or collectively.**

**4. State practices to promote tolerance and understanding, including with private and public actors**

- a) **Training/awareness raising:** What training on anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination issues does the State provide to (i) police (ii) security forces (iii) judiciary (iv) teachers and (v) local religious actors to support their role as key actors in preventing incitement to hatred or violence? What form does that training take?

**Trainings, seminars, conferences and refresher courses for police, security forces, law trainers and local clergies are held to prevent incitement to hatred or violence. In this regard, an action plan is adopted and agreements are signed between the relevant authorities.**

- b) **Removing barriers:** How does the State use public office to eliminate barriers between religious or belief communities and promote an inclusive society? Do such policies and practices include civil society and in particular, Muslims within those initiatives? Does the State have any initiatives (including non-legislative) in place to counter stigmatization and negative stereotyping of Muslims and incitement to religious hatred (e.g. facilitating exchange of information and resources on the "Istanbul Process" and implementation of HCR Resolution 16/18, interfaith dialogues) and/or promote interfaith tolerance, understanding and public discussion?

According to Article 29 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Freedom of Religious Belief, The State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which is responsible for state religious policy, should help strengthen an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance between religious institutions of different faiths. At the same time, it should facilitate the participation of religious organizations in business relations with international religious movements, forums, international religious centers and foreign religious organizations. The Republic of Azerbaijan does not discriminate to religion on political, social and legal matters. All steps taken by the state to promote an inclusive society include Muslims. At the same time, we note that because the majority of the population of Azerbaijan is Muslim, negative stereotypes and stigmatization of Muslims are rare in the country. In order to prevent the spread of religious hatred, the state provides financial assistance to religious organizations and religious figures. It finances their social projects and gives grants. According to dated 2 June 2020 decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev AZN 2. million from the President's Reserve Fund has been allocated to Caucasian Muslim Board in order to further strengthen the measures of religious enlighten and promotion of national and moral values in the country.

- c) **Tackling extremism:** Has the State identified whether sectors of their population are at risk of radicalization from extremism groups? What information is available on those groups' recruiting techniques and mechanisms for targeting alienated youth? Is extremism in the political system an issue for the State?

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- d) **Media:** Does the State require private or public media entities to have professional ethics and/or press codes that sanction anti-Muslim stereotyping, hatred and discrimination? Are there policies and regulations to promote pluralism and diversity of the media (including online), and which promote equal, universal and non-discriminatory access to and use of means of communication?

Historically, regardless of religion, language, race and other such important indicators, the representatives of different nations in our country have always lived as a family in friendship, brotherhood and kindness. This progressive tradition continues today and is one of the main characteristics of Azerbaijan.

The protection, development and formation of multicultural values in Azerbaijan is directly related to the tolerant attitude towards minorities and ethnic groups, as well as the result of religious tolerance in our country. In a country where more than 90 percent of the country's population is Muslim, the treatment of other religions is highly regarded, much to the surprise of all civilized societies. Azerbaijan is one of the few countries in the world where representatives of all religions live in conditions of mutual

respect and understanding, and there is no sectarian discrimination among Muslims. People of different religions have lived in peace in Azerbaijan for centuries and still do.

Measures are being taken in various directions, including in the media, to preserve this peaceful environment in which people of different religious beliefs live together in peace.

Thus, in Azerbaijan, on the basis of religious fanaticism and radicalism, there are penalties for inciting national and racial hatred, restricting civil rights, as well as for doing so through the media.

In this regard, new articles 283.1-1 and 283.3 were added to the Criminal Code at the suggestion of the President of Azerbaijan. According to the new Article 283.1-1, incitement to national, racial, social or religious hatred and enmity on the basis of religious hatred, religious radicalism or religious fanaticism, humiliation of national dignity, as well as restriction of rights or privileges of citizens depending on national, racial or religious affiliation shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term from 3 to 5 years if the actions aimed at identifying the perpetrator are committed openly, including with the use of the media. The proposed Article 283.3 provides for imprisonment for up to 5 years for financing the above-mentioned acts.

At the same time, Article 3.1 of the "PRINCIPLE 3: Protection of honor and dignity, inviolability of private life" of the "Rules of Professional Conduct of Azerbaijani Journalists" adopted on March 15, 2003 at the first Congress of Azerbaijani Journalists, improved on the basis of a joint project of the OSCE and the Press Council. It is also emphasized that journalists should not condemn people for their nationality, race, sex, language, profession, religion, place of residence or birth, and should not exaggerate such information about them.

In order to ensure the continuity of journalists' compliance with the requirements of this principle in their professional activities in Azerbaijan, the Press Council conducts regular monitoring.

The State Committee on Religious Associations regularly monitors print and electronic media on how state-religion relations are covered in the media in Azerbaijan. During various monitorings, sites were found in the country that contained information that could lead to sectarian, religious discrimination and incite religious conflict. Law enforcement agencies have been contacted at various times regarding these sites, and necessary measures have been taken.

The free functioning of various political parties and public organizations in the country, the release of numerous media outlets, the broadcasting of private television and radio channels, the rapid spread and development of social media, etc. are the concrete

visual consequences of the dominance of the atmosphere of political pluralism, freedom of speech and democracy in Azerbaijan. Development of freedom of opinion, speech and information, pluralism in the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the main conditions for building a legal state and civil society. The information policy of the state is aimed at ensuring the freedom of opinion, speech and information, the right of citizens to access information, reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In 2008, the Concept of State Support to the Azerbaijani Media was adopted by the order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. The Fund of State Support for the Development of Mass Media under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which implements this Concept, has been established.

- e) **Online platforms:** How does the State create an environment for open robust debate and dialogue, including through a free and open Internet, in line with the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, freedom of opinion and expression, and non-discrimination? How does the State engage with social media companies to address online harassment of Muslims and coordinate efforts in response? Does the State regulate website-hosting companies that host hateful or harassing content? Does the State impose liability for web hosts that host hateful or harassing content?

Freedom of belief and conscience is protected as a constitutional norm on all types of platforms, including Internet resources. The state is interested in creating an open environment, debates and roundtables in these areas without discrimination and hatred. To date, there have been no serious online concerns among Muslims in the country, therefore no formal partnerships have been established with social media companies. Hateful or disturbing information about the activities of website companies in Azerbaijan is rarely recorded. Such cases are subject to public pressure. The state is not responsible for hateful or disturbing web hosts.