

**REPORT**

**ON THE STATUS OF NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS  
MINORITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

**COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH**

YEREVAN 2010



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## INTRODUCTION

This Survey was carried out at the initiative of the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia with the support from the UN Development Programme in Armenia with the aim of strengthening democratic values and safeguarding the rights of minorities in the Republic of Armenia.

The expert group was requested:

1) To carry out a comprehensive and complete analysis of the national legislation on minorities from the standpoint of conformity with the international human rights law and standards; and

2) To study social aspects of minority rights in the Republic of Armenia, including the public opinion, perceptions, and stereotypes from the viewpoint of national, religious, and sexual minorities.

To accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the Armenian legislation and regulatory framework on minorities were analyzed and assessed against the applicable international standards and commitments undertaken by Armenia; applications and complaints received by the Office of the Human Rights Defender were reviewed; a number of meetings with representatives of minorities were held; and research and studies carried out previously by various organizations and projects were examined and consolidated.

The social-psychological analysis of three minority groups focused specifically on the prevailing attitudes and perceptions in various communities/groups, as well as tolerance-related matters.

The expert group was inherently conscious of the simple truth that the object of this review is extremely sensitive for not only minorities, but also society as a whole. Hence, efforts were made to present the beliefs and suggestions of minority representatives as precisely as possible. However, the expert group drew its inferences, as well, which did not necessarily coincide with the view of minority representatives.

Readers are kindly requested to make allowance in relation to certain thoughts and opinions of minority representatives cited in this survey in an intolerant or at times offensive tone.

The efforts exerted by the expert group to produce this survey will hopefully contribute to consolidating democracy and the legal framework in Armenia and increasing the level of tolerance in society.

# **SECTION 1.**

## **LEGAL REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES**

### **1.1. Survey Object and Methodology**

The objective of this review is to analyze the domestic and international legal regulation of the status of national and religious minorities and social-psychological aspects of the issue with a view to reaching much-needed and impartial conclusions and making comprehensive recommendations on promoting tolerance and respect for human rights.

The survey was conducted by a team of national experts and engaged experienced lawyers, social scientists, and psychologists in the analysis of the status of national and religious minorities, as well as the issues that minority groups are facing today.

Firstly, the survey aims at broadly analyzing the domestic legislation defining rights, freedoms, and obligations of national and religious minorities and to classify them by legal act type and evolution dynamics (amendments, supplements, or the adoption of overriding new legal acts).

Secondly, the legal status of national minorities in international law has been researched. Efforts of different international organizations in the field of protection of national minority rights and the adopted international legal instruments have been reviewed with a view to identifying all the essential legal provisions in international law and the Armenian domestic legislation for defining the legal status of national minorities.

The timing of the review coincided with the legislative initiative of some members of the Armenian National Assembly to amend and supplement the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which necessitated consideration of the problems of religious minorities in the context of both the text of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations as it presently stands and the text of the amendments proposed therein.

Thirdly, to identify issues related to implementation of respective laws, as well as social-psychological problems of the minority groups, the experts held discussions with representatives and leaders of national minority communities

(18 November 2008, 2 December 2008, and 10 December 2008), as well as members and leaders of some religious organizations.

### **1.1.1. Summary of main findings**

The problems of religious minorities are largely connected with the shortcomings of the extant law and the institutions responsible for implementation.

The following are some of the concerns of national minorities:

- a) Increasing the financing from the state budget;
- b) Granting tax privileges to non-governmental organizations of national minorities;
- c) Air time on television and the radio for programs in the mother tongue of national minorities;
- d) Ensuring national minorities' access to electronic mass media and print press of their mother countries;
- e) State support to the creation and printing of textbooks in the mother tongue of national minorities;
- f) Lack of preschools in the mother tongue of national minorities;
- g) Limited opportunity to participate in government in the form of quotas in elected bodies;
- h) Organizing Armenian language courses, organizing university admission exams and university education in the mother tongue of national minorities or in Russian in order to make higher education accessible for national minorities.

## 1.2. Overview of the National Legislation

The overview of the national legislation focused on analyzing both the structure and content of legal acts.

**Structure.** The legal acts on the status of national and religious minorities were classified on the basis of their legal force and hierarchy in the following way:

- Constitution of the Republic of Armenia;
- Laws of the Republic of Armenia;
- Decisions of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia;
- Decrees and orders of the President of the Republic of Armenia;
- Decrees of the Government of the Republic of Armenia;
- Legal acts of other bodies of the executive power of the Republic of Armenia;
- Legal acts of local authorities (regional governors (Marzpets) and local self-government bodies); and
- Court acts.

### 1.2.1. Constitution

Since declaring independence in 1991, Armenia adopted a policy of integrating with global and European structures and becoming a fully-fledged member of the community of civilized states, which implied the harmonization of the safeguards of human rights and fundamental freedoms with the international standards. Focusing on the strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights as domestic and foreign policy priorities, significant efforts have been exerted during the two decades of the independent Republic to create the legal and institutional framework for the protection of human rights.

The Armenian domestic law is based on the international legal formula of prescribing and safeguarding the rights of national and religious minorities as human rights, civil rights, and minority rights. In contrast to the 1995 text, the extant Constitution provides: “Article 3. The human being, his dignity, and the fundamental human rights and freedoms are supreme values. The state shall ensure the protection of fundamental human and civil rights in conformity with the principles and norms of international law. The state shall be bound by fundamental human and civil rights as directly applicable law.”

The Constitution is the core of the state policy for the protection of the rights of national and religious minorities. As a social value and a product of



development of society, the Constitution is inherently designed to safeguard the rights and freedoms of the individual.

The second chapter of the Constitution is fully dedicated to the fundamental human and civil rights and freedoms.

“Article 14. The human dignity shall be respected and protected by the state as an inviolable foundation of human rights and freedoms.”

“Article 14.1. Everyone shall be equal before the law.

Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, membership of an national minority, property, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited.” Article 18 of the Constitution provides: “Everyone shall be entitled to effective legal remedies to protect his rights and freedoms before judicial as well as other public bodies.

Everyone shall have a right to protect his rights and freedoms by any means not prohibited by the law.

Everyone shall be entitled to have the support of the Human Rights’ Defender for the protection of his rights and freedoms on the grounds and in conformity with the procedure prescribed by law.

Everyone shall, in conformity with the international treaties of the Republic of Armenia, be entitled to apply to the international institutions protecting human rights and freedoms with a request to protect his rights and freedoms.”

Relative to the old Constitution, new legal and institutional safeguards (the possibility of applying to the Human Rights’ Defender, the Constitutional Court, and international bodies) have been introduced for national and religious minorities.

Article 8.1, which was added to Chapter 1 of the Constitution, provides: “The church shall be separate from the state in the Republic of Armenia. The Republic of Armenia recognizes the exclusive mission of the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church as a national church, in the spiritual life of the Armenian people, the development of their national culture, and the preservation of the national identity. The freedom of activities of all the religious organizations acting in accordance with the procedure stipulated by law is guaranteed in the Republic of Armenia. The relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church may be regulated by law.”

Article 26 of the Constitution stipulated the new content of the right to freedom of conscience and religion, clarifying the forms and freedom of manifesting such right alone or in community with others. Besides, the same article

exhaustively defined the grounds based on which the exercise of the rights in question may be restricted.

The first part of Article 41 of the Constitution introduced a new right: “Everyone shall have the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity. Persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to the preservation and development of their traditions, religion, language, and culture.” Interestingly, the 1995 Constitution prescribed this right only for citizens, whereas the current definition provides the right to anyone regardless of citizenship.

Despite the limited scope of the constitutional rights of national and religious minorities, they are not exhaustively defined. Articles 3, 6, and 42 of the Constitution essentially stipulate the direct transformation of international law into the domestic legal system of Armenia. Article 6 of the Constitution, for instance, provides: “The international treaties shall come into force only after being ratified or approved. The international treaties are a constituent part of the legal system of the Republic of Armenia. If a ratified international treaty stipulates norms other than those stipulated in the laws, the norms of the treaty shall prevail.” The state is obliged to ensure the protection of fundamental human and civil rights in conformity with the principles and norms of international law. In other words, the provisions of international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia apply directly. Moreover, the right to their judicial protection is safeguarded. Article 8 of the Judicial Code provides: “Courts shall administer justice in accordance with the Constitution, international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia, and the laws of the Republic of Armenia.”

In contrast to the 1995 text of the Constitution, the extant Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (as amended on 27 November 2005) stipulates necessary and sufficient institutional safeguards related to the legal status of national and religious minorities; however, their effective and adequate realization depends on the level of the current legislative regulation.

### **1.2.2. Laws and Decisions of the National Assembly**

Armenia has not adopted a standalone law on national minorities, though such initiatives were taken in the past by both the Government and members of the National Assembly. Representatives of the national minorities have stated two obstacles to the adoption of such a law:

a) Some of them were completely against the adoption of such a law in view of concerns that their rights will be artificially restricted; and

b) Those in favour of adoption seriously disagreed with several provisions of the drafts.

The main laws of Armenia on national minorities are the following:

- Law on Language;
- Law on Television and the Radio;
- Civil Code;
- Civil Procedure Code;
- Criminal Procedure Code;
- Administrative Procedure Code;
- Law on Principles of the Cultural Legislation;
- Law on Geographical Names;
- Law on the Administrative Division of Territory;
- Law on Education;
- Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations; and
- Law on the Foundations of Administration and Administrative Proceedings.

The aforementioned and a number of other laws of Armenia contain standalone clauses on the rights of national minorities (especially linguistic,<sup>1</sup> educational, and cultural rights). From a formal legal standpoint, there are apparently no issues, but as the representatives of national minorities rightly stated in the meetings, their implementation is mainly hindered by the inadequacy of state budget financing.

Despite the large number of international treaties related to national minorities, which have been ratified by Armenia, there is still no comprehensive regulation in domestic law. A standalone law has not been adopted. As a consequence, the sub-legislation is not adequate, either. There are several dozen decrees of the Government, orders of ministers, and legal acts of central and local government bodies, which only mention national minorities, falling short of comprehensively regulating the issues. Moreover, there is still no legal definition of the term “national minority.” The absence of a comprehensive law hinders the development and implementation of effective and consistent policies on the status and problems of national minorities.

In both separate discussions and meetings with the representatives of national minorities, the expert group concluded that a standalone and comprehensive law on national minorities (a “framework” law) needs to be adopted.

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<sup>1</sup> On 26 December 2008, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted a Law Amending and Supplementing the Republic of Armenia Law on Television and the Radio, which removed the time restrictions on the broadcasting of programs in national minority languages.

The main legislative acts that apply to religious minorities in Armenia are as follows:

- The Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations;
- The Republic of Armenia Law on the Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church;
- The Republic of Armenia Law on Alternative Service;
- The Republic of Armenia Civil Code;
- The Republic of Armenia Civil Procedure Code;
- The Republic of Armenia Criminal Code;
- The Republic of Armenia Criminal Procedure Code;
- The Republic of Armenia Code of Administrative Infringements;
- The Republic of Armenia Administrative Procedure Code;
- The Republic of Armenia Law on the Foundations of Administration and Administrative Proceedings; and
- The Republic of Armenia Law on Education.

In about seven decades of Sovietisation, the state propaganda of atheism and the restrictions applied in Armenia had left a huge gap in the spiritual life of society, which was rapidly filled with old and new, known and unknown religious teachings and confessions during the period of Gorbachev's reforms and the initial years following the declaration of independence. For this reason, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia adopted the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations as early as on 17 June 1991 (hereinafter, "the Law"). The Law was "modelled" after a homonymous law of the USSR signed by its first and last president M.S. Gorbachev on 1 October 1990. To be fair, one should note that the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which is still in force with certain amendments and additions, still bears traces of the communist past. The situation was not corrected after the Law was amended and supplemented in 1997 and 2001. Moreover, the Law does not reflect the reforms adopted in the Constitution of Armenia by the referendum held on 27 October 2005 (Articles 8.1, 26, and 27). Besides, draft amendments to the Law submitted at the law-making initiative of several parliamentarians are presently in the session agenda of the National Assembly of Armenia, which, if adopted, not only would fail to address, but also would multiply the shortcomings and omissions in the extant Law and its inconsistencies with the Constitution.

The Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and the legislative initiative to amend and supplement it (P-380-21.11.2008, 27.01.2009-MI-010/0) need to be analyzed separately.

### **The Law Currently in Force**

- The Law needs to be brought in line with the Republic of Armenia Constitution (as amended).

- Article 5 of the Law contains some provisions that create serious ambiguity and may be abused by the state; for instance, “a group of citizens shall be recognized as a religious organization, if it meets the following conditions: ...

... b) Is based on any of the historically-canoned holy books;

c) By its confession, fits in the modern global system of religious-ecclesiastical communities;

d) Is free from materialism and is aimed at the spiritual spheres.”

It is not clear based on what criteria any religious book can be deemed “historically-canoned” and whether the absence of a book precludes the right of the followers of any faith or confession to unite in a religious organization, or what “materialism” means. Is pragmatism preached by some religions materialism?

- The words “among the circles of their believing members” should be removed from Article 6, because they contradict Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution of Armenia, which exhaustively list the permitted restrictions of this freedom (“The exercise of this right may be restricted only by law in the interests of the public security, health, morality or the protection of rights and freedoms of others.”) and the right to the freedom of expression, including the right to impart information.

- The right “to mobilize their believers around them” prescribed in Article 7(a) of the Law, in the absence of the right to create associations or unions of religious organizations, looks more like a restriction than a right.

- Article 8 refers to proselytism, but actually fails to define it. The Law only lists the types of activities that are not deemed proselytism. In other words, any activity beyond those stipulated by the Law is proselytism.

- Article 17(2) prescribes a number of “missions” as “monopoly” spheres of the “national church” (the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church), including “charitable activities,” “supporting the moral bettering of the Armenian people,” “the construction of new churches,” and the like, which is not only illogical, but

also directly contradicts the secular nature of the Armenia state and the principle of equality of rights prescribed in the Constitution.

- Article 17 of the Law and Paragraph 1(4) of Article 8 of the Republic of Armenia Law on the Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church provide that the national church has the right “to facilitate the spiritual education of society in educational institutions in the procedure stipulated by law,” failing to explain what “spiritual education” means, and whether it is the same as religious education. Further concern is caused by Paragraph 1(2) of Article 8 of the Republic of Armenia Law on the Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church, which provides: “The Holy Apostolic Armenian Church has the right: ... 2. To participate in the development of the curriculum and textbook of the “History of the Armenian Church” subject in state educational institutions and the setting of requirements on the qualification of teachers to teach it, and to nominate candidacies of such teachers to the schools.” This provision directly supports the unhindered and explicit propaganda of religion in public general educational institutions under the disguise of the “history of religion” subject, which contradicts the secular nature of the Republic of Armenia prescribed in Article 8.1 of the Constitution, as well as the Law on Education, which provides that schools shall be secular.

Thus, while the extant laws of Armenia apparently provide sufficient possibilities for the exercise of the rights of religious minorities, it is obvious that the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations needs to be reformed fundamentally in order to bring it into line with the Constitution, address the internal inconsistencies, or define or clarify the definitions of a number of concepts.

Draft Law to Amend and Supplement the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations (P-380-21.11.2008, 27.01.2009-MI-010/0)<sup>1</sup>

As was mentioned above, the proposed Draft, instead of addressing the shortcomings and omissions in the extant Law, has in fact added more problems.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.parliament.am](http://www.parliament.am)

This Draft has already been adopted by the National Assembly of Armenia in the first reading (19 March 2009). The National Assembly decided (2 February 2009) to discuss the Draft in two readings. On 15 September 2009, the inclusion of the Draft in the four-day-session agenda for discussion in the second reading was postponed by up to 90 days.

- The Draft proposes amendments to Article 5 of the Law, whereby the minimum number of members of a religious organization will be increased from 200 to 1,000, for which the logic is not clear. A new paragraph (f) is proposed to the same Article to provide as follows: “In case of the Christian faith, the group of citizens shall be recognized as a religious organization, if it worships Jesus Christ as God and Saviour and accepts the Holy Trinity.” This provision directly infringes upon the constitutional human right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 26 of the Constitution) and involves what should be a secular state in the determination of a controversial theological issue that has not been resolved even in theory.

- The Draft proposes supplementing paragraphs 1(b) and 1(c) of Article 17 of the Law with the words “except for cases provided by law,” which is completely unacceptable. Introducing such a provision in the Law will, on the one hand, enable the engagement of a state body or an entity performing its instructions into the structure of a religious organization, and, on the other, permit the placement of a “state function” upon a religious organization. The conflict with Article 8.1 of the Constitution is obvious.

- The Draft proposes a definition of “proselytism,” which it does not by means of actually defining the concept, but rather, describing cases of proselytism. As the representatives of a number of religious organizations have rightly pointed out, if the Armenian term “*hogevorsutyun*” (“հոգեւորսություն”) is a poor translation of the internationally-used term “proselytism”, then it was declared a long time ago in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 9.1) and fully reflected in Article 26 of the Constitution of Armenia. Besides, the cases of “proselytism” presented in the Draft seem very unclear and contestable; for instance, the case of material incentives that contradict charitable activities, or moral and psychological pressure and the like.

Under the Draft, Article 8 would be restated to read as follows:

“Article 8. Proselytism shall be prohibited in the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

Proselytism is the preaching influence on other citizens that have other religious views, which is accompanied with material incentives, physical pressure, threats and coercion, the use of offensive expressions in respect of other religious organizations, their faith, and activities, and the instilment of scepticism.”

In practice, legal issues may arise.

For instance, it is not clear whether it would be “proselytism” to distribute or mail literature or food against no or small payment (“preaching influence ... which is accompanied with material incentives”), or to e-mail it (for example, in the form of spam), or to advertise it (for instance, when the advertisement contains preaching influence that may be accompanied with the provision of something of value against no or small compensation).

Or, it is not clear whether products of theoretical analysis or fiction literature (“preaching influence ... which is accompanied with the instilment of scepticism”) would amount to “proselytism.”

There were heated debates around the publication of the book called “The Da Vinci Code” and the screening of the film. If Article 9 of the draft amendments is adopted, resulting in the restatement of Article 8 of the Law, with parallel amendments to Article 162 of the Criminal Code of Armenia, it is not clear whether the sale, screening, or other use of these artistic works would be qualified as “proselytism,” in other words a crime. Essentially, it is “preaching influence” that is “accompanied with the instilment of scepticism,” and may be perceived by many as “offensive.”

- Article 15 of the draft is extremely problematic, too. It provides that paragraph 2 of Article 19 of the Law shall be restated to read as follows: “The activities of the following religious organizations shall be prohibited in the Republic of Armenia territory: religious organizations that, during their activities, exercise or try to exercise control of the members’ consciousness, thinking, personal life, awareness, health, ownership, and behaviour.” This definition may be interpreted broadly and abused by the state.

The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, H. Abrahamyan, sent a letter to the Council of Europe on 2 March 2009 requesting assistance in the expert review of the draft Republic of Armenia Law on Amending the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations. Earlier, a similar letter had been sent to the Venice Commission by A. Ashotyan, member of the National Assembly, who had asked for a joint expert review with the OSCE/ODIHR. In response to the letters, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (“Venice Commission”), the Council of Europe Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, and the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief issued a joint opinion on the draft in question on 23 June 2009.<sup>1</sup>

The only National Assembly decisions covered by this research are the decisions of the National Assembly on the ratification of international treaties

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see [http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2009/CDL-AD\(2009\)036-e.asp](http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2009/CDL-AD(2009)036-e.asp)



by the Republic of Armenia.<sup>1</sup> The contents of these decisions are not of any interest. The same holds true for all the decisions of the National Assembly on approving the Program of the Government.

### 1.2.3. Sub-legislation of the Republic of Armenia

Decrees and Orders of the President of the Republic of Armenia

Decrees of the Government of the Republic of Armenia

The existence of a law regulating matters concerning **religious minorities**, despite its many deficiencies and shortcomings, precludes the regulation of such matters at the sub-legislative level.

Some of the sub-legislative acts regulating **national minorities** are the Republic of Armenia Presidential Decree on Approving the National Security Strategy, the Government Decree on Approving the Program of Culture Development in the Regions of Armenia, the Government Decree Approving the 2008-2012 Program of Activities of the Government of Armenia, the Government Decree Approving the 2006-2008 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, and others.

As for the legal acts of other bodies of the executive power, none exist in principle, because the types of legal acts in question can exist only in the form of sub-legislation, which is adopted on the basis of a law for purposes of enforcing such law. As mentioned above, a comprehensive standalone law on national minorities has not been adopted yet.

Legal Acts of Local Authorities (Regional Governors (Marzpets) and Local Self-Government Bodies)

Legal acts of local authorities, too, are sub-legislative acts. Besides, the powers of local authorities are confined to “matters of local significance.” Indeed, local self-government bodies are well-placed to solve a number of problems of national and religious minorities in their communities, but such efforts would depend on the commitment and financial capacity of each individual community, and cannot be highly effective in all the communities of Armenia.

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<sup>1</sup> The international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia in the field of this research are addressed in detail below.

### 1.2.4. Court Acts of the Republic of Armenia

Court acts have been divided into two groups:

a) decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia (on the conformity of laws and other legal acts with the Constitution, excluding decisions on the constitutionality of international treaties); and

b) court acts of the first instance, appellate, and cassation courts of the Republic of Armenia. The first instance and appellate courts' acts related to the status of national and religious minorities (if any) fall beyond the scope of this review, regardless of their relevance to the subject matter, because they are always made in concrete cases and have legal consequences only for the parties to the case at hand. In contrast, court acts of the Cassation Court of the Republic of Armenia are extremely important in this sense, as the Cassation Court reviews appeals against courts acts of lower courts, rather than cases *per se*. The only constitutional function of the Cassation Court of Armenia is to ensure the consistent application of the law. In other words, courts acts and the reasoning of the Cassation Court (like those of the European Court of Human Rights) have the value of precedent and are binding on lower courts in future cases with similar/identical circumstances (Article 15(4) of the Judicial Code of the Republic of Armenia). However, the review did not reveal any court acts of the Cassation Court related to the status of national and religious minorities. The reason perhaps is the fact that the Court has functioned with its current authority for only 1.5 years.

### **1.3. Overview of International Legal Instruments on National Minorities**

The analysis of international legal instruments related to national minorities is another important component of this Report. As mentioned above, ratified international treaties are a constituent part of the legislation of the Republic of Armenia (Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Article 6). National minorities emerged largely as a consequence of various international events, and the legal evaluation of their status is currently mostly a concern for specialists in international law. Therefore, to develop a complete understanding of the legal status of national minorities in a country, the evolution of the international law concerning national minorities should be comprehensively studied.

Thus, the research analyzes the vast majority of the existing international treaties on national minorities, with a particular focus on the acts ratified by the Republic of Armenia. The study addresses both universal and regional international treaties.

As a result, the commitments of the Republic of Armenia in the field of respect for the rights of national minorities have been outlined.

#### **1.3.1. The Original International Legal Instruments related to National Minorities**

The very first universal legal instruments concerning the protection of human rights and national minority rights emerged in the aftermath of World War II. Among them were the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International (UN) Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). They generally addressed the rights of national minorities by providing that all persons shall exercise their rights and freedoms without any discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

In the context of precluding discrimination, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) refers specifically to national minorities: “The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms ... shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as ... association with a national minority...”

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights makes special reference to national minorities by providing as follows: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

From 1948, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has operated under the UN's Commission on Human Rights. Owing to the efforts of the Sub-Commission, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities was adopted in the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in 1992. This Declaration makes general reference to the rights of persons belonging to minorities by providing that they have the right to enjoy their rights and freedoms without interference or any form of discrimination, to practice their own culture, religion, language, and traditions, to study their own language, to develop in the economic development of the country, and the like. The Declaration further provides that states shall take measures to stipulate the aforementioned rights and safeguard their realization, plan their national policies with due regard for the legitimate interests of minorities, provide them with information on the processes taking place in the country, and the like.

Clearly, the original international legal instruments concerning national minorities contained one or several articles that generically addressed the rights of national minorities with a primary focus on precluding any discrimination against national minorities. Despite it, though, one should not underestimate the role of the aforementioned instruments in the international legal protection of the rights of national minorities, *because the aforementioned instruments introduced the term "national minority" and ensured that national minorities are treated as a group enjoying the protection of the international instances.*

### **1.3.2. National Minorities in the Context of the Conference on Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)**

Some of the important rules on national minorities were adopted in the Human Dimension Conference of the CSCE in three stages in Paris (1989), Copenhagen (1990), and Moscow (1991). The Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on Human Dimension was particularly important in respect of na-

tional minorities, because the final document adopted there contained key principles regarding minorities.

According to the Final Document, the participating states recognize that the questions relating to national minorities can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework based on the rule of law, with a functioning independent judiciary. This framework guarantees full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and status for all citizens, the free expression of all their legitimate interests and aspirations, political pluralism, social tolerance and the implementation of legal rules that place effective restraints on the abuse of governmental power.

They also recognize the important role of non-governmental organizations, including political parties, trade unions, human rights organizations and religious groups, in the promotion of tolerance, cultural diversity and the resolution of questions relating to national minorities. They further reaffirm that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as part of universally recognized human rights is an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the participating States.

The Final Document referred to several rights of national minorities, such as the right of persons belonging to national minorities freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. In particular, they have the right:

- To use freely their mother tongue in private as well as in public;
- To establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organizations or associations, which can seek voluntary financial and other contributions;
- To profess and practise their religion, including the acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue;
- To establish and maintain unimpeded contacts among themselves within their country as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States with whom they share a common ethnic or national origin, cultural heritage or religious beliefs;
- To disseminate, have access to and exchange information in their mother tongue;
- To establish and maintain organizations or associations within their country and to participate in international non-governmental organizations.

Besides, the Final Document places the following obligations on the participating States:

- The participating States will protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory...

- The participating States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities.

- Every participating State will promote a climate of mutual respect, understanding, co-operation and solidarity among all persons living on its territory, without distinction as to ethnic or national origin or religion ...

- The participating States will co-operate closely in the competent international organizations to which they belong, including the United Nations and, as appropriate, the Council of Europe, bearing in mind their on-going work with respect to questions relating to national minorities.

The participating States clearly and unequivocally condemn totalitarianism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds. They declare their firm intention to intensify the efforts to combat these phenomena in all their forms and therefore will:

- Take effective measures, including the adoption, in conformity with their constitutional systems and their international obligations, of such laws as may be necessary, to provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to violence against persons or groups based on national, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, hostility or hatred, including anti-Semitism;

- Take effective measures, in conformity with their constitutional systems, at the national, regional and local levels to promote understanding and tolerance, particularly in the fields of education, culture and information;

- Consider adhering, if they have not yet done so, to the international instruments which address the problem of discrimination and ensure full compliance with the obligations therein, including those relating to the submission of periodic reports;

- Consider, also, accepting those international mechanisms which allow States and individuals to bring communications relating to discrimination before international bodies.

The final documents adopted as a result of the Paris and Moscow meetings, as well as other documents adopted in the frameworks of the CSCE also address the topic of national minorities, but in a much more superficial

way, mainly providing reference to the Copenhagen Final Document. It is stated in the Final Document of the Moscow Meeting, for instance, that the participating States confirm the provisions and commitments of all CSCE documents, in particular the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, concerning questions relating to national minorities and the rights of persons belonging to them, and call for their full and early implementation. They believe that, in particular, the use of the new and expanded CSCE mechanisms and procedures will contribute to further protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

*The CSCE Conference on Human Dimension has played a vital role in the stipulation of the rights of national minorities by carrying out a thorough analysis of national minorities with their diverse problems and making an attempt at solving them at the level of law. As a result, a complete set of legal rules concerning national minorities was adopted. The CSCE also promoted the adoption of national legal acts stipulating the rights and freedoms of national minorities, which continues in various countries to date.*

### **1.3.3. Oslo and Hague Recommendations of the OSCE regarding the Linguistic and Education Rights of National Minorities**

In July 1992 in Helsinki, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) created the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), which was called to facilitate conflict prevention at the earliest stage possible.

After four-five consecutive years of inception work, the HCNM was able to identify a number of regular issues and problems, focusing his attention mainly on the countries in which it was active. The linguistic and education rights of national minorities were among such issues.

In the fall of 1995 and the summer of 1996, the HCNM requested the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations to convene a small group of internationally-recognized experts, expecting it to come up with a set of recommendations on the appropriate and comprehensive realization of the national minorities' linguistic and education rights in the frameworks of the OSCE's activities.

Thus, the purpose of the Hague and Oslo recommendations regarding the education and linguistic rights of national minorities was to present the essence of such rights in a relatively clear and understandable language for purposes of the HCNM's activities.

## **Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities.**

The Hague Recommendations were made in areas such as education measures and resources, minority education at primary and secondary levels, minority education in vocational schools, minority education at the tertiary level, curriculum development, and the like. The following recommendations could be highlighted:

1) The right of persons belonging to national minorities to maintain their identity can only be fully realised if they acquire a proper knowledge of their mother tongue during the educational process. At the same time, persons belonging to national minorities have a responsibility to integrate into the wider national society through the acquisition of a proper knowledge of the State language.

2) States should approach minority education rights in a proactive manner.

3) States should create conditions enabling institutions which are representative of members of the national minorities in question to participate, in a meaningful way, in the development and implementation of policies and programmes related to minority education.

4) States should endow regional and local authorities with appropriate competences concerning minority education.

5) Private minority language educational institutions are entitled to seek their own sources of funding without any hindrance or discrimination from the State budget, international sources and the private sector.

6) In secondary school, a substantial part of the curriculum should be taught through the medium of the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis, preferably by bilingual teachers.

7) Persons belonging to national minorities should have access to tertiary education in their own language when they have demonstrated the need for it and when their numerical strength justifies it.

8) States should facilitate the establishment of centres for minority language education curriculum development and assessment.

## **Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities.**

The Oslo Recommendations were made to improve linguistic rights in the following areas: names, religion, the media, administrative and judicial autho-



rities, economic life, and deprivation of liberty. Some of the key recommendations are as follows:

1) Persons belonging to national minorities have the right to use their personal names in their own language according to their own traditions and linguistic systems.

2) Similarly, private entities such as cultural associations and business enterprises established by persons belonging to national minorities shall enjoy the same right with regard to their names.

3) In areas inhabited by significant numbers of persons belonging to a national minority and when there is sufficient demand, public authorities shall make provision for the display, also in the minority language, of local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public.

4) In professing and practicing his or her own religion individually or in community with others, every person shall be entitled to use the language(s) of his or her choice.

5) Persons belonging to national minorities, have the right to establish and manage their own non-governmental organisations, associations and institutions.

6) Persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own minority language media.

7) The independent nature of the programming of public and private media in the language(s) of national minorities shall be safeguarded.

8) Persons belonging to national minorities shall have adequate possibilities to use their language in communications with administrative authorities.

The analysis of the Oslo and Hague Recommendations shows that, while they contain many topical provisions to improve the legal status of national minorities, they are purely recommendations called to guide states in the protection of the rights of national minorities.

Another key aspect of the Recommendations is that they should not be viewed as a product of the states' shortcomings or omissions. They simply provide additional safeguards for the comprehensive protection of the rights of national minorities. Besides, they were made for all of the OSCE participating States, and not any State in particular, which means that the majority of the Recommendations have already been implemented in the OSCE participating States, including the Republic of Armenia.

### **1.3.4. Council of Europe Instruments concerning the Protection of National Minorities**

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages signed in Strasbourg in 1992 is an essential instrument related to the protection of the cultural rights of national minorities. A state that ratified the Charter shall specify in its instrument of ratification the national minority languages used in its territory and the obligations arising out of the Charter that it shall honour. On 28 December 2001, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia ratified the Charter and adopted a declaration, which stated that, in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 1 of the Charter, the Republic of Armenia “declared that within the meaning of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, minority languages in the Republic of Armenia are Assyrian, Yezidi, Greek, Russian and Kurdish languages.”

Under Article 2, paragraph 2 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Republic of Armenia declared that it “undertook to apply the following provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to the Assyrian, Yezidi, Greek, Russian and Kurdish languages:

- In the sphere of education, to make available minority language courses in pre-school institutions and schools in the appropriate settlements in which a sufficient number of families are present;

- To encourage the offering of minority languages as subjects and the teaching of subjects in minority languages in the sphere of adult education and in university education institutions;

- In criminal proceedings, to guarantee the person’s right to use his national minority language and to provide that evidence cannot be considered inadmissible solely on the ground that it was formulated in a national minority language;

- In civil and administrative proceedings, to allow litigants to use the national minority language and, whenever possible, exempt them of additional costs related to doing so, as well as to allow documents in administrative cases to be produced in the national minority language;

- To allow in administrative proceedings to produce documents in Armenian and the national minority language, and to allow using the national minority language;

- In disputes with local authorities, to allow the use of the national minority language parallel to the official language;

- If necessary, to use place names in the national minority language parallel to the use in the official language;
- To allow representatives of national minorities the use of their names and family names in their language;
- To make adequate provision so that broadcasters offer programmes in the national minority languages;
- To encourage the broadcasting of television and radio programs in the settlements of national minorities and to facilitate the creation of at least one newspaper in the national minority language;
- To guarantee the freedom of direct reception of radio and television broadcasts from neighbouring countries in national minority languages;
- To encourage cultural events and initiatives typical of the national minority language;
- To enable representatives of national minorities to participate in cultural events planned in the country;
- To enable representatives of national minorities to present their culture in other countries;
- To preclude the prohibition of the use of national minority languages in domestic private affairs;
- Otherwise to foster the use of national minority languages in private affairs;
- To encourage the use of national minority languages in the economic and social spheres;
- To enter into bilateral and multilateral agreements that will encourage the communication of persons communicating in the same national minority language; and
- To encourage trans-frontier exchanges for the development of national minority languages, enabling national minorities to communicate with the respective countries.

For purposes of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, “national minority languages” means languages that are different from the official language of the state and are traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State’s population.

Fundamental rights of national minorities are contained also in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which was signed on 1 February 1995 in Strasbourg. This Convention generally reiterates the provisions of the aforementioned international instruments regarding the

rights and freedoms of national minorities. More specifically, it too prescribes the national minorities' linguistic rights, cultural freedom, freedom from discrimination, freedom of self-expression, and a number of other rights and freedoms. However, this Convention contains an important novelty: it is the first to prescribe certain responsibilities. Article 20, in particular, stipulates: "In the exercise of the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention, any person belonging to a national minority shall respect the national legislation and the rights of others, in particular those of persons belonging to the majority or to other national minorities." The Convention further provides that the rights and freedoms of national minorities, which are safeguarded by the framework Convention, shall not "be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any act contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular of the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States."

### 1.3.5. Conclusions and Recommendations

To sum up the overview of the international legal instruments regarding national minorities, it can be stated with confidence that national minorities and their various problems are the focus of attention of international instances, and all attempts are being made at legally prescribing their diverse rights and freedoms in order to make sure that they live in equal conditions with other citizens of the state.

The analysis of the aforementioned acts shows that the international community attaches particular importance to the **principle of precluding discrimination** against national minorities. As mentioned above, the very first international legal instruments on national minorities prescribed this principle.

Virtually all of the international legal instruments mentioned in this Report prescribe the rights and freedoms of national minorities in a very generic manner, deferring the choice of the means of their realization to the ratifying states. Bearing in mind that the exercise of the prescribed rights will depend on the effectiveness of those means, it is important to highlight that the international instruments, while progressive on the one hand in terms of their humanitarian ideas, are deficient on the other hand in that the rules stipulated by them are too generic, which causes them often to remain on the paper as merely declarative provisions. The only exception perhaps is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which prescribes a full set of means for the exercise of a number of linguistic privileges by national mi-

norities. A State ratifying the Charter can choose the concrete methods whereby it wishes to safeguard the linguistic rights of national minorities.

However, despite all of this, it should be acknowledged that the most significant legal gap related to the legal status of national minorities is the absence of clear legal safeguards of the effective enforcement of the domestic and especially international law on national minorities. Under the current circumstances, if the prescribed rights of a person belonging to a national minority are violated, he may seek remedy in court. However, given the imperfection of Armenia's judiciary, for instance, and the inability of international courts to act swiftly, many rights of the representatives of national minorities residing in Armenia may be violated and never restored. This issue affects not only and not so much national minorities, as it has farther-reaching causes such as the economic underdevelopment of Armenia, high unemployment, and corruption in various spheres, all of which imply that belonging to a national minority does not place a person at a disadvantage. In view of these conditions, it would be inappropriate to compare the measures taken in Armenia to improve the legal status of national minorities with the experience of other countries, because countries only have a well-established legal framework on national minorities, if they have a large number of national minority representatives. The experience of countries similar to Armenia in this sense is not very different from the experience of Armenia.

Another issue related to the legal protection of national minorities is that neither the international legal instruments nor the domestic legislation differentiate between various minorities, especially in terms of minorities "sponsored" or "not sponsored" by any state, because they enjoy very different degrees of protection. There is apparently no specialized body of international law to which peoples without their own state, which have turned into national minorities within various states, may apply.

A comparison of Armenia's domestic legislation with the international legal instruments on national minorities reveals the following:

1. Armenia's domestic legislation on national minorities is not sufficiently comprehensive to support general conclusions, with the exception of several constitutional provisions that by and large reiterate the provisions of the international instruments.

2. As mentioned above, the international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia are a constituent part of the domestic legislation, which means that this part of the Armenian legislation overlaps with the international treaties.

To sum up the analysis of Armenia's domestic legislation and the international treaties ratified by Armenia, it can be noted that the national minorities in Armenia are legally generally protected; the fact that no claims have been filed with Armenian courts by national minorities alleging violations of their rights speaks of one of the following:

- a) The rights of persons belonging to national minorities are not violated in Armenia at all;
- b) Some rights of persons belonging to national minorities are violated in Armenia, but no remedies are invoked due to the low legal awareness; and
- c) Some rights of persons belonging to national minorities are violated in Armenia, but they do not wish or do not consider it appropriate to seek protection of such rights.

These and other questions will be answered in the remaining chapters of this Report by means of analyzing the social-psychological behaviour of national minorities.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the analysis made above and the international and domestic legal regulation of the subject matter, it is necessary:

- *To adopt a law on national minorities in Armenia (which will define the key concepts, the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of national minorities, the state regulatory bodies and their powers, and the additional responsibilities of local authorities (regional governors' offices ("Marzpetarans") and local self-government bodies);*
- *To create a unified organizational entity of national minorities (for instance, an association of NGOs of national minorities) after considering the feasibility and expediency of designating it by law and granting it special status;*
- *To create appropriate sub-legislation based on the law;*
- *To develop legal enforcement practice;*
- *To elaborate long-term comprehensive state programs to foster the realization of the constitutional right to the preservation and development of the traditions, religion, language, and culture of persons belonging to national minorities and supporting such programs through the financing and institutional and logistical resources of the state.*

## **1.4. Overview of International Legal Instruments on Religious Minorities**

Throughout world history, religion and confessions have decisively influenced the evolution path of mankind. There are currently numerous religions and confessions in the territories of virtually all the countries. Clearly, the relations between the state and religious minorities can seriously affect a country's international reputation and level of democracy. Therefore, it is highly important to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the rights and fundamental freedoms of religious minorities against the background of the reality in a country.

This Report analyzes the provisions of international legal instruments regarding religious minorities, including fundamental legal clauses related to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, the restrictions on the practice of religion and belief, the grounds for restrictions, the issues of proselytism, the right to the freedom of expression, and a number of issues related to religious organizations.

### **1.4.1. Freedom of Conscience and Religion in the International Legal Instruments Adopted by the United Nations**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("UDHR," 1948) was the first international legal instrument that prescribed the right to the freedom of conscience and religion. Article 18 of the UDHR provides: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

Later, the standard of Article 18 of the UDHR was reflected and elaborated in Article 18 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which provides:

"1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”

Below are some of the fundamental legal provisions related to the freedom of conscience and religion that flow out of this article:

- The Covenant safeguards the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, distinguishing between these three freedoms: the freedom of thought implies the freedom to think and have opinions, while the freedom of conscience implies the person's freedom to base or not to base his thinking and actions on any belief or ideology, and the freedom of religion implies the person's freedom to practice any particular denomination or none.

- The Covenant safeguards the aforementioned freedom to all persons regardless of their nationality, citizenship, or other status.

- The Covenant safeguards the person's right to exercise the freedoms listed in Article 18 in various forms, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private.

- The second paragraph of the Article importantly safeguards the protection of the person's religious rights from any coercion.

- A key legal issue related to the right to the freedom of conscience and religion is that of limitations. Article 18 exhaustively lists all the cases in which the right to the freedom of conscience and religion may be limited. An exhaustive list of limitations is an essential safeguard protecting the freedom of conscience and religion from arbitrary limitation by the state.

- The Covenant prescribes the right of parents and legal guardians to participate, to a significant extent, in the formation of religious beliefs of children, which is aimed at protecting children from “unhealthy” convictions.

In view of the importance of this article, the preamble of the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations (adopted on 17 June 1991) refers to Article 18 of the Covenant.

Other articles of the Covenant address religious rights, too. Article 27, in particular, provides: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic



minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.” This article provides an additional safeguard to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities for the unhindered exercise of their rights.

Naturally, the Covenant could not provide detailed regulation of all the matters related to the freedom of conscience and religion, and another key instrument in this field is the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief adopted in 1981.

Article 1 of the Declaration reiterates the first three paragraphs of Article 18 of the Covenant, while Article 2 defines the prohibition of discrimination and the term “intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief” used in the title of the Declaration. It is defined as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

Article 4 provides that all States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life.

Article 5 of the Declaration elaborates on Article 18(4) of the Covenant, addressing not only the rights of the child’s parents and legal guardians in relation to the spiritual education of the child, but also the child’s right to the freedom of conscience and religion.

Article 6 lists the freedoms included in the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, as follows:

1. To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;
2. To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
3. To make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;
4. To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas;
5. To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes;
6. To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions;
7. To train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief;

8. To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief; and

9. To establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels.

It goes on to provide in Article 7: "The rights and freedoms set forth in the present Declaration shall be accorded in national legislation in such a manner that everyone shall be able to avail himself of such rights and freedoms in practice."

Finally, Article 8 of the Declaration reads: "Nothing in the present Declaration shall be construed as restricting or derogating from any right defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights."

Though matters related to the freedom of conscience and religion are addressed in the Declaration,<sup>1</sup> the existence of such a declaration can be an important safeguard for the persistent exercise and protection of their rights by religious organizations operating in different countries.

#### **1.4.2. Right to the Freedom of Conscience and Religion and the Rights of Religious Organizations under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**

Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) provides:

"1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others."

In its case law, the European Court of Human Rights has addressed Article 9 of the Convention in rather great detail. To this end, the cases of *Kokkinakis v. Greece* and *Manoussakis and others v. Greece* are worthy of attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Declarations are international treaties that as a rule define objectives, though the title does not have any legal significance.

A challenge for many states is definition of legal grounds for limiting the freedom of conscience and religion. In this context, defining the concept of “proselytism”<sup>1</sup> is of particular importance.

In paragraph 2 of Article 9, the European Convention clearly lists all the grounds that must be present in order for limitations on the freedom to manifest one’s religion and beliefs to be considered legitimate. Limitations must be prescribed by law, pursue a legitimate aim, and be necessary in a democratic society.

“Prescribed by law” means that the limitation must be prescribed by the country’s legislative body. In other words, any limitation prescribed, for instance, by presidential decree or by legal acts of executive authorities or by court acts would be unlawful. This requirement shows that the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs is essential for building democratic societies, and that limitations can be introduced only by the parliament in order to avoid unnecessary arbitrariness.

The term “legitimate aim” is construed in paragraph 2 of Article 9 of the Convention. The following are legitimate aims for limiting the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs:

- Public safety and the protection of the public order;
- The protection of health;
- The protection of morals; and
- The protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Clearly, the Convention provides an exhaustive list of legitimate aims for limiting the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs, which are the same as the limitation grounds prescribed by the Covenant. The conclusion here is that any limitation of the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs that does not pursue any of the aforementioned aims would definitely violate Article 18 of the Covenant, Article 9 of the Convention, and other international legal instruments.

“Necessary in a democratic society” means that the state must prove that any limitation of the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs is necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued. In other words, the stated aims may often be reached without limiting the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs. Therefore, this criterion requires states to limit the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs only in extreme situations, when all the other lawful means have been exhausted.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 8 of the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations uses the term “հոգևորականություն” (“*hogevorsutyun*”), which in our opinion is not a legal term and cannot fully reflect the meaning of “proselytism.”

As for the term “proselytism,” it can be generally defined as activities aimed at forcible change of one’s religious denomination, which are accompanied with illegal or immoral acts. In particular, proselytism may take the form of material incentives, abuse of confidence, delusion, abuse of helpless condition, exertion of violence, and the like. As was shown above, the international legal instruments discussed here do not address proselytism, deferring its regulation to the domestic laws of states. However, it is clear that any arbitrary construal of proselytism by states will contradict the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. In other words, a clear definition of proselytism in the domestic legislation is another legitimate limitation of the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs, which, too, must be based on the aforementioned grounds for limiting the freedom.

Article 10 of the Convention indirectly relates to the freedom of conscience and religious association. It provides:

“1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.”

This article is essential for the exercise of the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs and especially in the sphere of activities of religious organizations. It can be of direct relevance to the construal of “proselytism” discussed above.

It is clear from Article 10 of the ECHR that everyone has the right to hold opinions and impart ideas, including those on religion and various beliefs. Religious organizations cannot be prohibited from exercising this right in any way other than those stipulated by Paragraph 2 of Article 10. The latter clearly specifies all the cases in which the freedom of expression and the freedom to impart ideas may be limited.

The citation of Article 10 of the Convention in this Report is not an end in itself, because Article 7 of the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of

Conscience and Religious Organizations, which lists the rights of religious organizations, does not stipulate the right of religious organizations to impart and preach their ideas; moreover, Article 17 of the Law gives the National Church the monopoly of freely preaching and spreading its faith throughout the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

### **1.4.3. Rights of Religious Minorities under Other International Legal Instruments**

In addition to the texts discussed above, a number of other international legal instruments contain provisions on religious minorities. Paragraph 9.4 of the Final Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on Human Dimension of the CSCE (1990) provides: “Everyone will have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change one’s religion or belief and freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief, either alone or in community with others, in public or in private, through worship, teaching, practice and observance. The exercise of these rights may be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and are consistent with international standards.”

The Final Document generally reiterates the provisions of the international instruments adopted prior to it, with one important difference that may create ambiguity: the second sentence of Paragraph 9.4 of the Final Document provides that “the exercise of these rights may be subject only to such restrictions...”, which means that restrictions may be applied also to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. However, both the Covenant and the Convention extend potential restrictions only to the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs. It can be said that this inconsistency is due to errors of legal drafting and wording issues in Paragraph 9.4 of the Final Document.

The Final Document emphasizes the importance of regulating legal issues related to national minorities, addressing their right to the preservation of their religious identity.

The religious identity of national minorities is addressed also in the final documents of the Paris and Moscow meetings of the Conference on Human Dimension of the CSCE. The rights of national and religious minorities often overlap and need not be repeated. However, national and religious minorities and their rights should never be equated.

As mentioned above, the religious rights of children are viewed as particularly important in international law. Hence, Article 30 of the Convention

on the Rights of the Child (1989) provides: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”

#### **1.4.4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

To sum up, it can be concluded that the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is recognized in international law as a fundamental and natural human right. The international legal instruments elaborate the nature of the right. A welcome fact is that the international legal texts address the limitations of the freedom to manifest religion and beliefs and the grounds of such limitations, aware of the potential negative consequences of the abuse of this freedom for society and the state.

With all of this, however, there are some gaps in the international law on this matter. The term “religious minority” is not defined, and the rights of religious minorities are not prescribed.

A related gap is that the international legal instruments do not contain provisions on religious organizations. While it is clear that provisions on the registration and liquidation of religious organizations and other technical matters related to such organizations cannot be regulated by international treaties, the latter could address the legal aspects of activities of religious minorities, i.e. what a religious organization is, what rights it may have within a state, when it can be considered a religious organization, whether persons professing a religion have to create a legal entity to accomplish their objectives, what additional safeguards will be given to minorities acting with legal entity status, and the like.

Presently, all of these issues are regulated at the discretion of states, which have come up with different ways of regulating the matter. The ensuing situation is that the right to the freedom of conscience and religion is differently exercised in different states and is not equally safeguarded to all.

International organizations are fighting against violations of the fundamental rights prescribed in the international texts adopted by them, some through courts, but it would be more productive to take action to prevent violations, rather than to try to overcome the consequences.

Tolerance should be viewed as a core principle in the sphere of these rights and should be expressed when one's own beliefs are harshly criticized. As the European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly noted, those that exercise their right to profess freely cannot expect to be free from any criticism. They should simply be tolerant and understand the fact that others may deny their views or treat the latter with hatred. If religious criticism trespasses certain boundaries defined by law, the state must intervene and sanction the offenders, or else the state may be held liable for the failure to safeguard the peaceful enjoyment of the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing, it is necessary:

- *To adopt a new law of Armenia on religious minorities or substantially amend and supplement the existing law (to define the key concepts, the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of religious minorities, the state regulatory bodies and their powers, and the additional responsibilities of local authorities (regional governors' offices ("Marzpetarans") and local self-government bodies);*
- *To preclude criminal liability for the so-called "proselytism";*
- *To revise the duration and other terms of alternative service with a view to ensuring that they are no longer perceived as punishment for religious views;*
- *To create appropriate sub-legislation based on the law; and*
- *To develop legal enforcement practice.*

## **Section 2.**

### **Social-Psychological Analysis of the Status of National and Religious Minorities**

#### **2.1. Social-Psychological Analysis of the Status of National Minorities**

##### **2.1.1. Objective and Methodology of the Social-Psychological Survey of the Status of National Minorities**

###### **Survey Purpose**

The purpose of the survey was to identify the social, economic, political, and cultural issues faced by ethnic minorities living in Armenia.

###### **Survey Objectives**

1. To assess the level of integration of ethnic minorities living in Armenia.
2. To reveal signs of ethnocentrism on the part of ethnic minorities living in Armenia.
3. To study the ethnic minorities' perceptions of and expectations from the Armenian population.
4. To study the ethnic minorities' opinions of the positions and attitudes of the Armenians in respect of them.
5. To study the ethnic communities' perceptions of the future of their communities in Armenia.
6. To analyze how ethnic minorities identify with their own group and distinguish from other ethnic groups.
7. To analyze the peculiarities of how the ethnic identity of persons belonging to ethnic minorities is expressed.
8. To analyze the forms and trends of tolerance and discrimination of Armenian society in respect of persons belonging to ethnic minorities.
9. To reveal issues of self-realization and integration of ethnic minorities in Armenian society.
10. To make recommendations on fostering tolerance and respect for human rights in society.



## **Survey Target Groups**

The survey targeted the following 11 national minorities living in the Republic of Armenia:

1. Kurds;
2. Yezidis;
3. Jews;
4. Greeks;
5. Georgians;
6. Russians;
7. Belarusians;
8. Ukrainians;
9. Germans;
10. Assyrians; and
11. Poles.

## **Survey Methodology and Justification of the Choice of Methods**

Given the peculiar nature of the researched topic and the need for unbiased information, it was decided to carry out focus group interviews (with 10-12 participants from each community) with the participation of different social-demographic groups, as well as in-depth interviews with persons closely familiar with the problems of the communities and competent to speak on behalf of the community.

The final questionnaire, as adjusted after the piloting, contains the following main sections (the questionnaire is attached).

- Ethnic minorities' self-identification and expression of national identity;
- Perception of their own culture and its differences from or similarities to the Armenian culture. Existing auto-stereotypes (assessments and opinions of their own ethnic group) and hetero-stereotypes (assessments and opinions of other ethnic groups);
  - Problems of the community;
  - Manifestations of tolerant/intolerant attitudes towards ethnic minorities;
  - Social distance;
  - The future of communities: concerns, fears, and expectations; and
  - Recommendations of representatives of ethnic minorities on improving the status and resolving the problems of ethnic groups living in Armenia.

## 2.1.2. Presentation and Analysis of the Social-Psychological Survey Findings

### 2.1.2.1. Ethnic Minorities' Self-Identification and Expression of National Identity

Based on the comparative analysis of the perceptions of all of the surveyed ethnic minorities about identification with their ethnic group and differentiation from other ethnic groups, in particular Armenians, they can be conditionally grouped into the following categories:

1. National minorities that consider Armenians close to them because of their ethnic origin.

2. National minorities that distinguish themselves from Armenians.

*The first category* would include *Kurds, Assyrians, and Greeks*. These ethnic groups considered themselves very close to Armenians in view of the importance of shared history and destiny, as well as the fact of living in the same geographic region.

Thus, the *positive ethnic identity* of Kurds, Greeks, and Assyrians can be considered to associate with positive attitudes towards Armenians. Besides, the representatives of these minorities, especially those with university education or active roles in public life, have *dual ethnic identity*, i.e. they realize their similarity to Armenians and have dual cultural awareness.

*The second category* could include the *Poles, Belarusians, Russians, Jews, and Georgians*. However, there are differences between these ethnic groups.

The Poles and Belarusians attribute themselves to the Slavic culture, stating that they have many similarities with the Russians. They believe they are bearers of a completely different culture. The Poles, in particular, mentioned their cultural proximity to the Ukrainians, while the Belarusians distinguished themselves from the Ukrainians, stating that the latter consider themselves superior to the Belarusians. The Poles contrasted their culture to the Armenian culture, stating that the Poles stand out by their European culture, while the Armenian culture has only some elements of the Western culture.

The president of the Polish community mentioned some similarities between the Poles and the Armenians, such as hospitality, the value of family, the related family traditions, love for children, and caring attitudes. She also mentioned some differences, stating that "*the Poles do everything to turn their*

*children into independent individuals; something that the Armenians are lacking.”*

The Belarusians stated that they are adaptive and calm by their nature. The president of the Belarusian community emphasized that these qualities make them capable of living in Armenia.

The Belarusians consider Armenians very insightful, talented, and hospitable. The Belarusians appreciated and mentioned the facts of being an “old” nation and having a historic past as advantages. The Poles, too, appreciate Armenians, stating that Armenians have lived in Poland for a long time, where they have been among the political and intellectual elite.

Having analyzed the auto-stereotypes and hetero-stereotypes of the Poles and Belarusians, one can conclude that they treat Armenians positively and loyally. They have *positive ethnic identity*, which, however, does not take the form of *over-identification* with their nation. Children of mixed parentage, though, have been observed to have *dual ethnic identity*, as well as *marginal ethnic identity*.

Russians have *positive ethnic identity*, with some *over-identification* with their nationality. For Russians in general and children of mixed parents, one of whom is Russian, the Russian identity is the *reference identity*. However, it does not preclude manifestation of *dual ethnic identity*.

The auto-assessment and hetero-assessment of both Jews and Georgians show that they have pronounced *ethnic over-identification*. It is also interesting that, when they spoke of their culture, history, and national character, they made little reference to commonality with Armenians. However, among both Jews and Georgians, there were some individuals (mostly -aged and more senior participants of the focus groups) that said that their home country is Armenia, because they have lived longer here, have spent their youth in Armenia, and feel at ease here.

### **2.1.2.2. Perception of Own Culture and Its Similarity to/Difference from the Armenian Culture. Existing Auto-Stereotypes (Assessments and Opinions of Own Ethnic Group) and Hetero-Stereotypes (Assessments and Opinions of Other Ethnic Groups)**

Perceptions of being distinct are rather pronounced in the Jewish, Greek, and Georgian communities. Representatives of the *Jewish* community believe that peculiar traits of the Jewish culture include memory of the past, religionism, unity, pride for having statehood, and standards and values of mutual help forged over centuries.

Representatives of the *Greek* community have the following perceptions of their ethnic group: “*We are proud to be heirs of the Ancient Greek civilization.*” (Participants of the focus group.)

The Greeks consider that Pontian Greeks are culturally the closest to Armenians, as they came to Armenia around 1915-1916 and almost fully integrated and adapted in Armenia. The Pontian Greeks claim that they are “*the best integrated of all the ethnic minorities in Armenia.*”

In the opinion of the *Georgian* community, Georgians stand out for their knightly treatment of women, generosity, hospitality, and music. Another difference mentioned was that the Georgian culture was characterized as an “urban” culture in contrast to the other cultures of the Caucasus states. Many claimed that the Georgian culture was unique and has always been a source of innovation (the first rock concerts, jazz festivals, and ballet in the Soviet Union, etc.).

Representatives of the Georgian community believe that the Georgian culture is extremely tolerant, which is the reason why famous writers, poets, and artists of different nationalities lived and worked in Georgia.

Georgians believe that the tolerance of the Georgian culture is best illustrated by the fact that many residents of Tbilisi appreciate only their local, but not national identity, claiming that they are Tbilisians, i.e. bearers of a multifaceted urban culture.

Georgians characterize Armenians as “cunning” and consider that Georgians are “much more simple and sincere”: “... *it was only here that I learnt that one should not be so open and sincere and say everything that one thinks. Armenians are much more cunning than us*” (65 year-old female participant of the focus group).

Georgians characterize Armenians, especially Armenian men, also as “rude and aggressive,” perceiving them as different from the young Georgian

men, whom the respondents consider to have much more of “European” looks, as opposed to the Armenian men, whom they consider to have “provincial” looks and generally to have very limited views of the world. One respondent even cited the following example in an attempt to bust the “myth” that Armenian men are good husbands and fathers: “*In Tbilisi, Georgian men boycotted an Armenian man that had hit his wife.*”

Opinions about Armenian-Georgian relations were generally divided. The more senior respondents thought that the existing tension is a product of recent years’ flawed policies of both sides, the collapse of the Soviet ideology of equality of nations, and the lack of information about the other nation.

The younger respondents believed that Armenians and Georgians have always been and are currently in a state of rivalry over the monopoly to represent the Caucasus. A young female Georgian respondent who worked as a guide stated that, even when guides presented Georgia and Armenia, they tended to attribute the same historic events to each of their respective nations, neglecting the input of the neighbouring nation.

The president of the “Rossiya” non-governmental organization argued that the Russian culture stands out for its intellectual nature, humanism, philanthropy, and high spiritual values; besides, the self-consciousness of Russians is dominated by their identification with “powerful Russia,” “the Greater nation.”

Representatives of the *Assyrian* community perceived their ethnic group as a very old people that differed from other peoples by their looks and traditions. The Assyrians also stated that they were much more naive, trusting and believing others, and always fighting against injustice, unlike the Armenians who, in the opinion of the Assyrians, were more cunning, enduring, flexible, and to an extent even had slave psychology.

The Assyrians thought that Armenians treated them very positively and kindly; both nations were considered to have good knowledge of each other’s languages, accepted mixed marriages between Armenians and Assyrians, and both always aspired to get good education. Assyrians thought that a key bond between the two nations was the virtually concurrent adoption of Christianity and the Assyrians’ support to Armenians in difficult situations.

The *Polish* and *Belarusian* communities did not see major differences between their cultures, mindset, or behaviour, as both considered themselves bearers of the Slavic and European cultures. The Poles, for instance, viewed Armenians as prosperous, intellectual, and art-loving people, whilst also mentioning that, despite the fact that the new wave of Armenians that emigrated to

Poland after the collapse of the Soviet Union has seriously damaged the good reputation of Armenians built over the centuries, there has been an emerging trend in recent years of perceiving the Armenian community of Poland as an advanced and progressive one.

Representatives of virtually all the communities generally considered themselves similar to the Armenians in terms of commitment to family, hospitality, love of knowledge, diligence, historical similarities, sorrows, and a common enemy (in the case of the Kurds, Yezidis, and Greeks).

With some exceptions, the representatives of all the national minorities generally have positive attitudes towards Armenians. Representatives of the Russian and Polish communities, in particular, stated that one could not treat badly a nation that has been such a kind host.

### **2.1.2.3. Social and Psychological Problems of the Communities**

As could be expected, the *financial* problem was the most frequently cited problem. Representatives of the ethnic communities believed that the 11 million drams allocated from the state budget was too small of an amount to support the cultural events of all the communities.

Among the problems, respondents also mentioned the *indifference of the state* towards minorities. Many were of the opinion that the state did not make full use of the resources and potential of the national minorities.

Virtually all of the communities said they felt isolated and alienated from public-political life in Armenia.

Representatives of the Yezidi community said that Yezidi-inhabited villages are currently worse-off in terms of the social-economic conditions than the neighbouring Armenian villages. It turned out that the Artona Village in the Aragatsoth Marz, for instance, does not even have a school building.

The *preservation of national monuments and cultural centres* is an acute concern for the Assyrian community. However, the leader of the community stated that in view of the current economic difficulties, even those school principals that were Assyrian no longer considered it expedient to keep the class hours designed for the Assyrian language given the insufficient number of students for those classes.

Representatives of different communities mentioned that, while many people in Armenia *faced health problems and needed treatment*, the ethnic minorities were even more vulnerable.

Some communities are supported by their mother countries through individuals, organizations, or governments, including embassies in Armenia. However, structured and institutionalized support is provided mostly by the American-Jewish community and Israel, the Russian Embassy in Armenia, and the Polish authorities, which have helped those in need, organized free events, purchased cars for the community, rented offices in the centre of the city, and the like. Some Assyrian families are supported by benefactors from the Assyrian communities from other countries.

*A problem within the individual communities* is that different subgroups are active within many of the communities (many are registered as non-governmental organizations), competing for the monopoly to act on behalf of the community. Within the Russian community, for instance, there are 10 organizations and youth associations, of which only three have come together after much effort and are trying to cooperate.

It should also be mentioned that there are certain manifestations and perceptions of *competition and hierarchy* between national minorities. Some representatives of minority groups argued that the Armenian authorities display more favourable attitude toward the Russian community, and that this “preferential treatment” might trigger tension.

#### **2.1.2.4. Trends of Tolerant/Intolerant Attitudes towards National Minorities**

The survey showed that the majority of the ethnic minorities living in Armenia did not feel any obvious discrimination in Armenia, especially in comparison to the status of their fellow nationals in other countries.

Some said that the ethnic minorities were very devoted to Armenia and would always be by Armenia’s side at difficult times. Others said the following: *“They treat us like usual in Armenia, not bad and not good, as if our existence does not matter to the Armenians.”*

Representatives of different national minorities tended to explain expressions of intolerant attitudes towards them mostly by human and personal factors, rather than any specific national ideology against them. Moreover, they assumed a part of the responsibility in this respect, stating that it was their duty to learn to live with the nation that hosted them.

It transpired from the responses of the focus group participants that the tolerant attitudes took more the form of indifference than actual tolerance with

pronounced moral standards and values. The indifference had been observed in both public life and the state's policies towards national minorities.

### **Manifestations of Discrimination**

Nonetheless, the survey also revealed obvious signs of discrimination at different levels.

*Yezidis*, for instance, mentioned a purposive trend of not appointing *Yezidis* to key posts. In the *Yezidi*-inhabited Sori Village in the Aragatsotn Marz, for instance, an Armenian that did not even live in the village was appointed as the school principal, despite the availability of qualified individuals among the village population.

A representative of the *Assyrian* community, who teaches at the Yerevan Architectural University, recalled an example when his colleague had said literally the following in his presence: "*This Assyrian is getting teaching hours, while I am not.*" Later, it was attempted to take the teaching hours away from the *Assyrian* lecturer and to give them to an Armenian, telling him that "*you are different, you are not one of us.*" However, when the respondent tried to raise the issue before the university administration, he was asked not to publicize it.

In a secondary school, a child with an *Assyrian* mother and an Armenian father was not accepted to the Russian class on the ground that the child had an Armenian surname.

In another case, when an *Assyrian* woman told her friend, "*in any event, I feel myself to be an Assyrian; I am not an Armenian,*" the friend responded: "*What kind of Assyrian are you? You are a real Armenian.*" A stranger that was passing by intervened and said: "*You should be proud that an Armenian perceives you as an equal.*"

The president of the "Rossiya" non-governmental organization said that, although it is not a clear expression of discrimination, children that graduate from schools where Russian is the language of instruction find it difficult to take the state exams in Armenian, as they are required to take the same tests as graduates of schools where Armenian is the language of instruction. As a consequence, parents decide to take their children to Russia.

Instances of discrimination have recently become pronounced and more widespread against the *Georgian* community.



*Our history teacher said in front of a 100-student audience that Georgians are not a nation, and that Turks are better than Georgians (young female participant of the focus group, student of the Journalism Department at Yerevan State University).*

*Several days ago, a woman, apparently irritated about the Georgians selling tangerines in the market, loudly said: "Eh, Turks are better than these Georgians." (Middle-aged young female participant of the focus group.)*

*I have a friend who has a Georgian last name, and when he needed to be transferred to a popular foreign university to study as an Armenian citizen, he was literally told that it was impossible to send someone with such a surname from Armenia (young female participant of the focus group).*

The problem escalated in recent years, particularly in connection with the destruction of Armenian churches in the Javakhk region of Georgia. The focus group participants that studied in Yerevan and have lived in Yerevan for over 30 years mentioned that they always felt great respect for them and for the Georgian culture in general, but the younger ones said they felt clear intolerance and even discrimination from people of their age. The representatives of the Georgian community attributed this treatment to the lack of correct information about Georgia and the Georgians, as well as the politics between Armenia, Georgia, and Russia.

The Georgians said that they found this negative attitude only among the Armenians that live in Armenia, because they never complained about Armenians living in Georgia, even in the Javakhk region. The Georgians generally considered Armenians to be rather ungrateful and to have forgotten that, after the earthquake in Armenia, the Georgians were the first to help, as they always do when Armenians are in trouble. Some Georgians said that, considering Armenia's unfavourable geopolitical position and the lack of diplomatic relations with two of its neighbours, developing hostility with Georgia was at least short-sighted and dangerous for Armenians.

To sum up the foregoing, attitudes towards ethnic minorities can be classified in the following way:

1. “Armenians are indifferent towards us, though they do not behave intolerantly” (neutral and status-quo attitudes).
2. “Armenians are ready to accept us just the way we are and to cooperate with us” (tolerant attitude).
3. “Armenians clearly discriminate against us at both the micro and macro levels” (intolerant attitudes and behaviour).

### **2.1.2.5. Social Distance**

Mixed marriages are a good indicator of social distance. Almost all of the national minorities surveyed accept mixed marriages and have no fear of losing their national identity. Women belonging to different national minorities, which have married Armenian men, stated that their rights in family in respect of national holidays, use of language, and the upbringing of children, have not been restricted.

Of all the national minorities, mixed marriages are rare only in the case of the Kurds.

National minorities are not seen to participate actively in public and political life. It transpired from the interviews that national minorities become publicly active only in the context of cultural programs of their communities. Besides, the different national minorities consolidate in the implementation of cultural programs of their communities.

Representatives of almost all the national minorities said that they are very close with one another, constantly taking part in each other's events and supporting whenever problems arise. Furthermore, they jointly develop programs that are mainly designed to preserve and disseminate the national minority culture. Young people are the most active in this process, as illustrated by the fact that the youth organization of the Greek community initiated an event called “Ethnic Bridge” in order to consolidate the young representatives of different national minorities. This initiative implies a series of events that will be carried out sequentially by the youth organizations of all the communities. The non-governmental organizations of almost all the communities have their youth wings, which indicates that they appreciate the importance of forging national self-consciousness and are consistent in the efforts to preserve their culture. Many stated that contacts between young people have become more frequent, though it mostly applies to the young people in Yerevan, while the village youth do not benefit from such contacts.

The participants of the focus groups and the community leaders stated that representatives of national minorities did not encounter obstacles in their activities. However, they do not have sufficient capacity and funding. The financing received by the communities is not sufficient for carrying out their programs. The communities that receive financial assistance from abroad (mostly, the Jews, Russians, and Poles) are able to widen the scope of their activities.

#### **2.1.2.6. The Future of Communities: Concerns, Fears, and Expectations**

The national minority communities mainly associate their future with the general social, economic, and political situation in Armenia, which many view rather pessimistically: “... *it is hard for us to believe in a “bright” future for Armenia.*”

Communities have some demographic problems, as well. The Greek, Russian, Georgian, and Belarusian communities have aged rather considerably, which undermines the preservation and development of these communities in Armenia. Most of the young people have left or desire to leave, though representatives of different national minorities have repeatedly asked “... *not to attribute this fact to any discrimination, as it is a decision motivated purely by the social and economic conditions.*” Many have no desire to travel to their mother countries out of the expectation that they will be full of problems and difficulties, or that they will be treated as marginals there.

Representatives of the Yezidi community believe that, though people do not wish to leave their villages, they will have to leave if the state remains indifferent to those villages.

Representatives of the Assyrian community think that everything is in their hands, because the conflicting groups within the community undermine the community’s image and destroy it from within.

Representatives of the Russian community consider that “*the Russian community in Armenia is dying out and vests its hope with Armenians that speak Russian and are fond of the Russian culture, and not necessarily ethnic Russians.*”

The Russian community also fears that any deterioration of the Armenian-Russian relations may negatively affect ethnic Russians that are citizens of Armenia.

Others believe that the national minority communities will develop in the years to come, because they have become more active since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as expressed in the rising national self-consciousness, the desire to better know their roots, history, and culture, and the like.

### **2.1.2.7. Recommendations of National Minority Representatives on Improving the Status of Ethnic Minorities Living in Armenia and Solving Their Problems**

1. Introduce quotas for ethnic minority representatives at the level of decision making (central government, local self-government bodies, and the like).
2. Granting national minority representatives privileges in the contests of civil servants: for instance, if four people are short-listed as a result of the contest, one of which belongs to a national minority, he or she should get the advantage in appointment.
3. Establishing quotas to promote the education of young representatives of national minorities.
4. Carrying out PR for national minorities by means of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia promoting their national culture, national heroes, and historic events.
5. Offering free courses of Armenian language instruction.
6. Building cultural centres of national minorities, especially in minority-inhabited villages.
7. Posting signs in the national minority language in villages populated solely or predominantly by national minorities.
8. Developing special policies and paying more attention to ethnic minorities that do not have statehood.
9. Building sanctuaries and monuments for ethnic minorities.
10. Publishing a Russian-language newspaper that will cover the issues of national minorities and present their culture.
11. Publishing textbooks in the minority languages and producing television programs (even in Armenian) covering the problems, lifestyle, customs, and habits of national minorities.
12. Paying retirement pensions to persons belonging to national minorities, which have left Armenia and have reached retirement age.
13. Settling the housing issue of individuals and families belonging to national minorities, which have left Armenia.

14. Restoring and activating the Steering Committee for Issues of National Minorities.

15. Representatives of the government making frequent visits to villages populated by national minorities.

16. Allocating class hours for language and religion in the secondary schools of villages populated by national minorities.

17. Relations with national minorities of countries that are members of the same organizations as Armenia (for instance, the Council of Europe or the OSCE) should be built on a different level from those that are not members of such organizations. Moreover, if a country invests in Armenia's economic development (for instance, the investments of Greece in agriculture), then representatives of the national minority of such country should be hired for related jobs without any contests.

18. Adopting a law on national minorities (it should be mentioned, though, that not all of the 11 national minorities have agreed to this proposal).

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. National minorities living in Armenia are observed to have positive ethnic identity, as well as marginal and dual ethnic identity. It means that national minorities generally do not feel psychologically oppressed or at risk of assimilation.

2. The analysis of auto- and hetero-stereotypes of national minorities supports the conclusion that they do not have deeply-rooted negative preconception of Armenians. Georgians are the only exception: in their evaluations somewhat amplified inter-ethnic differences are noticeable and overvalue of the positive perception of their own ethnic group is evident which result in emerging of prejudices in relation to Armenians. This situation is due to the certain tension recently observed in the relations between our two countries.

3. Based on the perceptions of national minorities, it can be generally stated that Armenians' have more tolerant attitude towards national minorities, and such tolerance is expressed through positive attitudes based on an emotional stance. At the same time, the research captured manifestation of indifference due to the lack of interest in and inadequate level of awareness and knowledge about national minorities among public at large and at the policy-making level.

4. National minorities do not feel discriminated against by the Armenians as per their evaluations. If representatives of national minorities find it difficult to succeed in society, it is due to personal factors and access to resources

more than explicit prejudice in the public conscience or discrimination based on national ideology. Nonetheless, cases of discrimination have been reported against Georgians, especially in recent years.

5. National minorities are rather active in preserving their identity, language, and culture. The obstacles faced by them are mostly financial, rather than political and legal.

6. National minorities are isolated from society and active only within the confines of their communities. They encounter obstacles in promoting their culture in society, which is due to their lack of engagement in public and political life, as well as the inadequacy of information about them in the media and more generally in the public.

The following recommendations are compiled on the basis of conclusions drawn from this review and the desires expressed by representatives of the national minorities.

1. To ensure sufficient coverage of national minorities in the mass media by means of the following:

- Covering various issues of public importance encountered by representatives of national minorities;
- Preparing special programs through which national minorities can present their culture to the public at large;
- Special programs (for instance, talk shows) to discuss examples of issues faced by national minority representatives in Armenia, their solutions, mutual perceptions, and the like.

2. To activate the development of inter-state programs and agreements on national minority issues with the engagement of national minority NGOs registered in Armenia: implementing special inter-state programs (educational, scientific, social security, and cultural) will help to resolve problems faced by individual representatives of national minorities and to augment the resources necessary for the preservation of the national communities' culture.

3. To develop clear state policies on national minorities, which will include:

- Improving the law on national minorities, especially the legislation on use of language with a view to specifying the scope of the language use rights and responsibilities;
- Regularly monitoring the existing and potential problems of national minorities;

- Stimulating public activity of national minorities (for instance, by introducing quotas to safeguard access to government and competitions for office); and

- Maximizing state attention to the important national holidays of national minorities and other significant aspects of their national identity (support to the construction of sanctuaries, educational and cultural centres, and the like).

4. To create possibilities for national minority representatives to study the Armenian language at no cost. Moreover, in schools attended by national minority children, additional (elective) courses in the national language should be organized, so that language studies are not limited to Sunday school possibilities.

5. To study national minority problems in general and specific issues affecting national minorities:

- To study problems encountered by representatives of different age groups and to develop strategies for addressing such problems (for instance, support to the survival and health of retired persons, employment for middle-aged persons, health of single women, education of children and young people, and the like);

- To pay special attention to problems of children of mixed parentage, because they have the option of either not integrating in society at all, positioning themselves as marginals, or fully integrating in society as bearers of a dual cultural identity;

- To pay special attention to the problems of national minority representatives living in rural areas.

## **2.2. Social-Psychological Analysis of the Status of Religious Minorities**

### **2.2.1. Purpose and Methodology of the Social-Psychological Survey of Religious Minorities**

#### **Survey Purpose**

The purpose of the survey was to identify the social-psychological issues faced by representatives of religious organizations registered and operating in Armenia and the cases of discriminatory treatment towards them.

#### **Survey Target Groups**

The survey targeted the religious organizations registered and operating in the Republic of Armenia.

It should be noted that, during the survey, numerous problems were encountered in finding representatives of the religious minorities and arranging meetings with them, because the telephone numbers of about 80 of the organizations in the list provided by the Ministry of Justice of Armenia were outdated/wrong. Besides, difficulties arose when trying to arrange meetings with the religious groups, as many strongly requested to send them in advance the questions to be discussed or completely refused to meet, citing various reasons.

The organizations that the experts met with are:

1. Union of Evangelical Churches
2. Armenian Evangelical Church
3. Armenian Full Gospel Church
4. "The Word of Life" Church
5. Seventh-day Adventist Church
6. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (The Mormon Church)
7. Jehovah's Witnesses

#### **Survey Methodology**

Given the survey purpose and target groups, it was considered expedient to use qualitative survey methods such as *focus group interviews* and *in-depth interviews*. The meetings with each group or individual lasted from 2 to 2.5 hours.

Parallel *monitoring* was carried out, because virtually all the meetings took place on the premises of the religious organizations. *Secondary analysis*



of the documents and other information materials published by religious organizations was performed.

## **2.2.2. Analysis of the Social-Psychological Survey Findings**

To make the presentation more illustrative, the survey findings have been divided into the following categories:

1. Characteristics of religious communities;
2. Religious identification and self-determination; interdenominational perceptions;
3. Motivations for joining a religious community; and
4. Perceptions of tolerance/intolerance.

### **2.2.2.1. Characteristics of Religious Communities**

All of the religious groups<sup>1</sup> started operating in Armenia from the 1990s, mostly as a result of the preaching and support of missionaries from different countries. All the religious communities generally have the external elements typical of any religion, i.e.:

1. A group of believers;
2. A system of beliefs;
3. Rituals; and
4. Articulate moral principles, norms, and code of conduct.

The following main characteristics of the religious communities distinguished them from the Apostolic Armenian Church and, more generally, the traditional religious organizations:

Refusal to accept the traditional church as an organization;

More liberal views on the essence of the preaching, spiritual music, and the outfit of pastors;

Friendly relations between the church leaders and the ordinary followers, no social distance;

Absence of the traditional rituals; and

The presentation of the Bible and the Christian teaching in an accessible and understandable manner.

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<sup>1</sup> The Report uses the terms "religious community," "religious group," "sect," and "religious organization" in reference to religious minorities.

The activities of the “new” religious communities could be characterized as a blend of the rational and the irrational. On the one hand, there is some ritualization (service, special ceremonies, and the like), prophecy, theurgy, and worship, and on the other, there is domination of a rational attitude on various issues, such as ethical conduct, healthy lifestyle, and the like. All the churches have a hierarchy, i.e. there are those on a higher spiritual level, those to whom the church council may bestow a higher status in the future, ordinary members, missionaries, and the like.

Some differentiating features, among other, include, for instance, the following: the Adventists find it unacceptable to work on Saturday, while the Jehovah’s Witnesses refuse to celebrate birthdays and the New Year’s or to engage in politics, serve in the army, or get blood transfusion. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has a different approach to baptism, because this church practices baptism after eight years of age and considers that baptising a newborn is a mistake, because it is not conscious baptism.

The Christian churches consider that they are in many cases more traditional than the Armenian Apostolic Church, because certain principles and ceremonies are early-Christian and were accepted before the Apostolic Armenian Church was formed. At the same time, , many recognize the pre-eminence of the Apostolic Church or consider themselves sister-churches (especially the protestant churches).

Majority of the churches have a moral code, which, in addition to some general traits (be honest, not lie, help the other, and so on), implies a healthy lifestyle: no smoking or drinking, and healthy nutrition.

In extreme cases, other members of the church may discontinue the membership of an offending member. However, the person that cannot comply with these canons often leaves the church voluntarily.

All the churches have an advanced practice of mutual help both between members of the group and generally in respect of vulnerable groups of society.

The Mormons, for example, have a special ceremony: one day per month, they do not eat anything, and donate the amount that they would have spent on food to the neediest member or family belonging to their church.

All the churches implement various social programs to help the poor, street children, prisoners, and indigent pregnant women. Different types of health and education programs are widespread. The Adventists, for instance, are very keen on healthy lifestyle and the cooking and eating of healthy meals. Therefore, they conduct numerous seminars and training courses about the harm of smoking, alcoholism, and drug addiction.

The representatives of religious groups generally believe that what they do serves the nation, helping to develop and even “save” the Armenian people.

The majority of the religious communities does not accept equality of men and women in the administration of the church, but are generally quite tolerant of gender equality. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, for instance, follow the teaching of their prophet, considering that they “*should stand by the women, rather than ahead of them.*”

All the churches visited for purposes of the survey had rather spacious, well-equipped, and furnished premises. The “Word of Life” Church, for instance, has its own printing house for a journal, an audio recording studio, a large hall for Sunday school, and over 20 office employees. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is located in a large multi-storeyed building, equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

A natural question arises about the sources of funding of the churches. The pastors claim that they are generated from the donations from the members. Majority of the members of the religious communities, however, are representatives of the middle and lower classes; many are in fact indigent. Rene Levonyan, the President of the Armenian Evangelical Church, was the only one to mention that their church is mostly supported by the Diaspora.

#### **2.2.2.2. Religious Identification and Self-Determination; Interdenominational Perceptions**

It transpired from interviews with the followers of different churches that their theological identity has two closely interrelated peculiarities: firstly, they recognize that they are Christian, and secondly, they disagree that their church be viewed as a sect.

Representatives of all the churches covered by this survey consider themselves *Christian*, because they confess to Jesus Christ and follow the Bible, recognizing it as the Holy Book. It was mentioned, in particular, by representatives of the Evangelical churches (Evangelical Church Association and Association of “Word of Life” Evangelical Churches) and the Church of the Seventh-day Adventists. Representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints mentioned that, alongside the Bible, they also follow the Book of Mormon, which is equal to the Bible and supplements the latter, because the Book records another testament of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Stating to be Christian, they also mentioned that they believe in the Holy Trinity. Followers of the Church of Jehovah’s Witnesses also consider themse-

Ives Christian, but do not recognize the Holy Trinity and the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

Representatives of all the churches said that they were Christian also in view of the origins and identity of their respective churches. On this point, though, there were some differences as to the primacy of being Christian.

Representatives of the Evangelical churches noted that their churches are considered *sister churches* of the Apostolic Armenian Church, which means that they are aligned with the Apostolic Armenian Church on the main theological principles. Their differences from the Apostolic Armenian Church are due more to rituals and ceremonies than to theological concepts. The president of the “Word of Life” Church even mentioned that they recognize the authority of the Apostolic Armenian Church, because it is a traditional church that has historic significance.

In reference to the history of their church, representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints said that their church, though formed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, restored the original church of Jesus Christ, which had been transformed and fragmented into various branches for centuries. They said that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints restores the *authority of the original church of Jesus Christ* through its rituals, organizations, and apostles.

Representatives of the church of Jehovah’s Witnesses stated that they are the traditional followers of Jesus Christ, because they are considered *first-century Christians*. It means, according to them, that the Jehovah’s Witnesses keep the origins of the Christian faith more “pure.”

It generally transpired from the interviews that representatives of all the churches were concerned on being perceived as sects. They did not consider themselves “*sectarians*” and noted that their churches were not sects, because they had a solid history of creation and were recognized in the international religious communities as autonomous denominations. However, there were some interesting differences even on this point. Representatives of the Church of the Seventh-day Adventists and the “Word of Life” Church mentioned that a “sect” reflects only the trend of departure from a traditional denomination into an autonomous teaching. They further said that such a perception was very common in many European countries, and that people treated sects without any prejudice. If the notion of a “sect” were not tied to any prejudice in Armenia, then, according to the representatives of the aforementioned churches, they would not worry if others spoke of them as “sectarians” or called their church a “sect.” However, the words “sect” and “sectarian” have a

profoundly negative connotation in the perception of Armenian society, which is often also politicized. Comparing the opinions of the followers of different churches on this point, it can be said that the negative connotation is tied to a number of excluding meanings, such as:

- Being sectarian means being anti-Christian;
- Being sectarian means being a non-Armenian;
- A sectarian is a strange person; or
- It is the religion of the Americans (representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

The negative perception of the words “sect” and “sectarian” in Armenian society definitely exists. The definition of the term “sect” in the literature, however, stands for a smaller and less formalized group of believers in comparison to the dominant church.<sup>1</sup>

Representatives of the Evangelical Church Association and the church of the Jehovah’s Witnesses categorically refused to have their churches treated as sects. The former considered their church a sister church of the Apostolic Armenian Church, and the latter claimed that they were not registered as a sect (in documents of the UN, in particular).

Representatives of different churches reacted differently to being referred to as a “religious minority.” The Seventh-day Adventists and representatives of other Evangelical churches argued that a definition based on size was very relative, because it was not clear which church had the majority of followers, especially if their church were compared with the Apostolic Armenian Church in terms of the number of followers and their dedication to their faith. The senior pastor of the “Word of Life” Church was more indifferent to this matter, noting that “*if we are fewer, than we are a minority.*” The Jehovah’s Witnesses, too, did not object to being referred to as a minority, justifying it by the fact that, in many cases, the minority speaks out the truth, for which it is persecuted.

### **2.2.2.3. Motivations for Joining a Religious Community**

The motivations for joining a religious community can be divided into the following categories:

**1. The fundamental human need for communication, warm relations, and “belonging to a group.”** Membership in a religious community primarily meets a basic human need of being accepted. The atmosphere in the religious

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<sup>1</sup> N. Smelser, *Sociology*, p. 468.

communities was extremely warm and kind, and every member felt accepted, respected, and loved.

**2. Need for spiritual knowledge, accompanied with dissatisfaction about the forms and methods of the teaching by the Apostolic Church.** Many followers of religious communities said in the interviews that they have finally gotten to understand the “secret” of the Bible, its symbolic interpretation, and hidden meaning, which they could not find for many years in the Apostolic Church.

**3. A chance to be the “chosen one.”** In some cases, this factor had to do with the official names of the churches (for instance, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or “Mormons”) or their core ideologies (according to the teaching of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, only 144,000 believers throughout the world will find complete salvation). Every baptised member of the church essentially has a special relationship with God and is considered a “latter day saint,” which distinguishes him or her from all the other people that are not baptised by the pastor of their church or, moreover, are not members of their church. The belief of being “chosen” is also manifested in the fact that virtually all the members “have some special spiritual knowledge” or have information that is not accessible to other people about “the end of the world,” “symbolic appearance,” “the location of paradise and hell,” and “the time when the Saviour will appear.” Having a unique place and role within a religious group *per se* raises a person’s social-psychological status, because a person becomes “chosen” by virtue of the fact that he has gone through the necessary stages and procedures, gained trust, and proven that he is “moral and trustworthy.” Belonging to the dominant church virtually does not imply any conscious choice and, in some sense, is considered “by default”, as opposed to the decision to join a sect. Joining a religious group is a conscious and free choice of a mature adult, which implies that the person was “chosen” and “trusted” for **his personal virtue**. Moreover, members of the same religious group and, often, other religious minorities perceive members of religious groups as honest individuals with a flawless reputation. Even in everyday life, one often hears that someone “is a believer who has joined a certain organization, and they are honest workers.” The perceptions of being the “chosen” ones are rather strong among the Mormons: only a man chosen by God may become a pastor, as God has chosen him for doing his job on earth. Such a person must be worthy and live up to the honour of pastorate.

**4. Difficult moral conditions, trauma, and stress events.** Some people are motivated to join religious communities after some crisis in life or a

serious test of the spirit, which leads many people into insurmountable situations or, in extreme cases, suicidal thoughts, and becoming a member of a religious group becomes the only “salvation.” People that end up in such situations often go to the churches about which they have learnt from their neighbours, close friends, or relatives.

**5. A legitimized and socially-accepted opportunity to justify social injustice, inequality, and suffering.** Religion helps some believers to find the meaning of situations that may seem unfair or insurmountable, or to explain and find the causes of disease, poverty, disasters, and personal and social mishaps. Moreover, the religious explanation of injustice and misfortune is shared by the majority of society and, to some extent, legitimizes social and economic problems such as social stratification, power, extreme poverty, and discrimination; it provides answers to global existential questions like “why did it happen to me,” “why is life so unfair to me,” “why is there injustice, poverty, and war in the world,” and the like. Religion also has somewhat of a protective function, i.e. it helps people to get rid of phobias and gain confidence, in that *“the loving Father is always with me and will protect me from any injustice and mishap, or at least give me a chance to understand why it happened to me.”*

**6. Possibilities of self-expression and social identity building and control.** Another motivation for joining a religious group is the issue of structuring one’s individual identity in general and the religious identity in particular. In a religious group, a person becomes able.

a. **Fully to express oneself and become perfect.** (*“My whole life, I tried to reach perfection in some sphere, to become a famous artist or writer, but I do not have any particular talent, and my lifelong impression is that I leave everything unfinished. By joining the Jehovah’s Witnesses, I became able to be perfect, and I know that I will eternally live in paradise, always remain young and beautiful.”*)

b. **To structure and control one’s identity.** Membership in a religious group enables the person to become an active agent of the construction, transformation, or control of one’s identity, which allows the individual to manage one’s life and actions to some extent in the modern unstable, unpredictable, and constantly transforming society.

**7. Following “the Voice of God.”** Many members of the religious communities believe that there is a reason why they ended up in the group, as they went there following God’s voice, and once there, understood how God controls one’s life. For many, membership in the church coincided with some “supernatural” event in their lives. A woman, for example, mentioned that she

was long unable to get pregnant, and once she joined the Church of the Seventh-day Adventists, she got God's blessing and had a child. Then, she took her husband and child to the church.

8. Finally, special attention should be paid to the **phenomenon of social and cultural anomie** (the lack of a clear system of social norms, sanctions, and values, or the collapse of cultural unity, because of which people's experiences and actions stop corresponding to the societal norms) as a common cause for joining religious communities, especially in societies in transition. Generally, the post-Soviet area is considered anomic in the sense that the former Soviet value system has collapsed, a new one has not emerged yet, and people have to find whatever new values and to create new local environments and cultures that will attribute meaning to their life and everyday actions.

Membership in a religious group naturally leads to abrupt change in a person's everyday life. What transforms often is the past interpersonal relations (*"I have virtually no contact with the people to whom I was close before coming here; they do not understand me, some pitying and some thinking that I have lost my mind"*), interests and value system, as well as the distribution of time (*"I spend a greater part of the day here; this is my home"*), and entertainment places. People become more restrained in terms of clothes, jewellery, and the material world.

Most of the members of the aforementioned churches visited attend the church with their families. The families of the pastors and priests, too, spend the whole day in the church and participate in various events, ceremonies, and the like.

In many cases, though, membership in religious groups creates interpersonal conflicts within families and at the workplace. Particular problems arise in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, which refuse to celebrate birthdays or other holidays, or to participate in family and other events, often trying to preach their beliefs at the workplace and to recruit others.

#### **2.2.2.4. Perceptions of Tolerance/Intolerance**

The survey findings support the conclusion that intolerance towards religious minorities is far greater than that towards ethnic minorities.

Some religious communities perceive it as an expression of stereotypes in Armenian society generally towards anything that is new and different. The most common stereotype that religious minorities feel towards them is that they



are “sectarians, off the track, dangerous for society.” It is common knowledge that there are numerous other stereotypes towards religious communities and their members, for example, calling them “agents of special American projects”, “Israeli spies”, “dividers of the nation”, and the like.

### **2.2.2.5. Manifestations of Intolerance at the Level of the Public Conscience**

The followers of various churches repeatedly stated that people encountering them for the first time often tend initially to label them as “sectarians.” The church followers had the impression that people did not even understand the meaning of the word. They have frequently encountered the following expressions in relation to the word “sect”: “*It is something bad,*” “*it is aberration,*” “*strange,*” “*dangerous,*” “*believer.*” The label of a “believer” is attached more to sectarians than to followers of the Apostolic Armenian Church. All noted that initial contact with them is almost never without bad treatment whenever the interlocutors find out that they are dealing with someone who is not a follower of the Apostolic Armenian Church. However, they also mentioned that, after lasting interpersonal contact, attitudes sometimes change for the better, sometimes easily, and at times not so easily. There are some cases, frequent according to the representatives of the “Word of Life” Church, when people in contact with them start showing an interest in their religious teaching and join their church.

The church followers noted cases in which they had been denied different services in shops, petrol stations, publishing houses, and elsewhere after the vendors found out that they were not followers of the Apostolic Church. In their turn, the representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints did not report such cases.

The church followers reported frequent cases of intolerance and offensive attitudes towards their children in schools, mostly in the form of lower grades, threats against classmates to prevent any contact with children whose parents are sectarian, or offensive and degrading expressions about the child’s parents, even forcing a child to attend school on Saturday (in the case of the Seventh-day Adventists).

The church followers reported facts of discriminatory treatment in both recruitment and dismissal (“Word of Life” Church and Jehovah’s Witnesses). They said, however, that the discrimination is most often indirect, for example, in the form of complaints about performance and moral pressure, which forces

the representatives of their church to quit their jobs voluntarily. When asked in which organizations or schools it has been observed, and of what scale, they did not provide clear responses, stating that they did not want the facts to become widely known, because it would eventually hurt them, as the prejudice towards sects is rather deeply-rooted in society.

Referring to cases of intolerance and discrimination, the church representatives noted that they are neither prevalent nor regular. A representative of the “Word of Life” Church stated that discrimination happens in about 5% of the cases. The leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, too, reported little discrimination in the public at large, clarifying that, sometimes, at the workplace, for example, there have been cases of both firing and hiring, during which the employer knew that the person was a follower of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Many of the interview participants noted that, in ordinary contacts and at the workplace, they prefer not to speak of their faith in order to avoid undesirable attention to their private life.

#### **2.2.2.6. Intolerant Attitudes in the Mass Media**

In the opinion of the representatives of different churches, the intolerant or negative or critical coverage in the mass media is due to both a special policy and the prejudice towards sects, which is prevalent in the public conscience. The leaders of the churches noted that many journalists completely misrepresented the facts collected from interviews with them, because, in their opinion, the journalists either were carrying out an order or were unprofessional. Therefore, they generally do not trust journalists. The leaders of the churches also complained about virtually no coverage of their activities, while the activities of the Apostolic Armenian Church were covered. Some complained that they were almost never invited to television or, if they were invited, they had limited opportunity to speak. The president of the “Word of Life” Church even noted that struggling is pointless in this area, because it would be very hard to break the resistance. He further noted that, even if a private case from the life of the church is covered or some information is presented in the media about a follower of the church, the video will normally use certain cutting techniques or other journalistic tricks that distort the reality and present the church follower as strange and crazy. Besides, the leaders of all the churches emphasized the fact that the clergy of the Apostolic Armenian Church are carrying out propaganda against them and instilling intolerance, as they do not

miss the opportunity to speak badly of other religious organizations on television.

It transpired from interviews with the church leaders and ordinary followers that they generally did not trust the mass media. In fact, the leaders of the churches tend to reject invitations to television programs and avoid contact with journalists.

### **2.2.2.7. Intolerant Attitudes at the State-Political Level**

The leaders and officials of the churches noted that they were unable to report cases of obvious discrimination and political intolerance by the state. However, they said that the discriminatory trends were officially reflected in state-political positions in the form of the amendments proposed by members of the Armenian National Assembly on 27 January 2009 to the Republic of Armenia Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia. On this point, representatives of the Evangelical Church Association, the “Word of Life” Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints indirectly hinted at the influence of the Apostolic Armenian Church on the process, which they considered a “special order.” The various churches have responded negatively to the proposed amendments, but the most active campaign has been launched by the Collaboration of Churches and Organizations of the Armenian Evangelical Family. They have reviewed the draft and made certain recommendations. In their version of the draft, the authors have generally tried to minimize the monopolistic rights of the Apostolic Armenian Church over the faith of Armenian citizens, their religious education, and possibilities of providing other services.

Several cases were mentioned, in which representatives of different religious groups had been demanded to desert their church in order to get employed. Some had agreed, but others had not. However, it should be noted that such cases are rare.

Intolerance diminishes considerably after direct contact with members of churches. The representatives of the religious communities noted that, after people met them and saw that they were “ordinary” human beings not different from the other Armenians, their opinions and stereotypes started to change.

It should be added that the “One Nation” Party and the “Alliance of Armenian Nationalists” have been disseminating the following flyers: *“Death to the sectarians and their members! This verdict convicts the sectarian movements to death for subverting and fragmenting the Armenian Race.”*

### 2.2.2.8. Summary and Recommendations

The sociological survey of religious groups registered and operating in the Republic of Armenia revealed the following.

1. New religious movements emphasize the unusual and mystical traits of the person, which can enable ordinary human beings to become priests, reverends, or even founders of new religious denominations. Each movement has a charismatic leader.

2. Religious groups are characterized as a blend of the moral rational and the mystical irrational.

3. Religious groups, depending on the historical origins and teachings of their churches, have different positions on “salvation” and earthly life.

4. The emergence of the new religious movements and the formation of new religious conscience can be generally considered a consequence of anomie, on the one hand, and a special way of fighting against the contemporary conditions of life, injustice, and social stratification, on the other. The collapse of traditions, norms, and values entails a crisis of religion, which in turn leads to the emergence of various new religious movements, ideas, and creeds.

To eliminate discrimination against religious minorities in Armenia, it is recommended:

1. To ensure that media outlets do not misrepresent the religious minorities and provides correct and respectful information. Members of religious organizations have reported that, often, television shows videos of gatherings of Satanist groups or strange religious groupings functioning abroad and claims that it is the Armenian reality. Instead, media should present the essence, historical origins, and objectives of the different groups. Depicting all the religious groups as having the same history and mission testifies to intolerant and ignorant attitude.

2. To engage experts and representatives of religious organizations in the process of amending the Republic of Armenia *Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and other related legislation*.

## REFERENCES

- N. Smelser, *Sociology*, –M.:Phoenix, 1998.

### Legal acts of the Republic of Armenia

- Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (with amendments)
  - Law on Language of the RA
  - Law on Television and Radio of the RA
  - Civil Code of the RA
  - Civil Procedure Code of the RA
  - Criminal Code of the RA
  - Criminal Procedure Code of the RA
  - Administrative Procedure Code of the RA
  - Administrative offences Code of the RA
  - Law on Cultural Legislation Principles of the RA
  - Law on Geographical Names of the RA
  - Law on the Administrative Division of Territory of the RA
  - Law on Education of the RA
  - Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations of the RA
  - Law on relations between Republic of Armenia and Armenian Apostolic Saint Church of the RA
  - Law on Alternative Service of the RA
  - Law on the Foundations of Administration and Administrative Proceedings of the RA
- Draft law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations of the RA (amendments)

### International legal acts

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950)
- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992)

- Final documents of the Human Dimension Conferences of the CSCE in Paris (1989), Copenhagen (1990), and Moscow (1991).
- Oslo and Hague Recommendations of the OSCE regarding the Linguistic and Education Rights of National Minorities
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992)
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981)

### Cases

- Kokkinakis vs. Greece
- Manoussakis and Others vs. Greece
- Dudgeon vs. United Kingdom
- Norris vs. Ireland
- Modinos vs. Cyprus
- Toonen vs. Australia

## Section 3.

# Attitudes of Yerevan Residents towards National and Religious Minorities Living in Armenia

### 3.1. The Survey

#### Survey Purpose

The purpose of the quantitative survey was to discover the attitudes of Yerevan residents towards national and religious minorities.

#### Survey Objectives

1. To study tolerant/intolerant interethnic attitudes of Yerevan residents.
2. To study the attitudes of Yerevan residents towards representatives of different religious denominations and religious minorities.
3. To compare the tolerant and intolerant positions of Yerevan residents by sex, age, and level of education.

#### Survey Method

Quantitative research was chosen as the survey method that is the most appropriate way of studying public attitudes. The survey was carried out using a special questionnaire (annexed hereto).

#### Survey Sample

The survey universe was the Yerevan population of at least 18 years of age. The sample was estimated using an 8% sampling error margin. The target variance was estimated through a pilot survey at 0.9, and the sample size was estimated with 95% accuracy ( $k=1.96$ ).

$$N=703567-(1.96)^2*(0.9)^2 / 703567*0.0064+(1.96)^2*(0.9)^2=484$$

The survey sample comprised 511 persons: to make sure that the sample was representative and homogenous, respondents were broken down into categories by sex, age, and education.

48% of the survey respondents were female and 52% male. The age-group and education-level breakdown was as follows:

Age	Share, in %
18-25	20
26-35	26
36-45	38
46-55	15
Above 56	1

Education	Share, in %
High school	38
Incomplete higher	6
Higher	49
Post-graduate	7



## 3.2. Analysis of Survey Finding

### 3.2.1. Analysis of Tolerant/Intolerant Interethnic Attitudes of Yerevan Residents

This study addressed the following indicators of interethnic tolerance:

1. Attitude towards representatives of other nations living in Armenia (from extremely positive to extremely negative) and awareness;
2. Aspects of social distance in interethnic relations;
3. The ethnic factor in interpersonal relations:
  - Nature and frequency of relations; and
  - Relations at the workplace, especially the supervisor-subordinate relations;
4. Impact of the ethnic factor on social and political matters (participation in the ethnic discourse, expressions of ethnocentrism); and
5. Territorial identity.

The attitudes towards the 11 national minorities living in Armenia (with a percentage breakdown) are presented in the table below. The comparison stretches from extremely positive to extremely negative attitudes towards each ethnic group (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

Attitude of Armenians towards Different Ethnic Groups\* (in %)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jews	21	2	29	25	8	12	3
Assyrians	13	5	35	30		7	2
Kurds	8	2	24	23	20	16	7
Greeks	23	6	32	27	6	5	1
Russians	16	15	30	26	8	4	1
Yezidis	8	4	33	29	12	11	3
Ukrainians	16	6	35	32	5	5	1
Georgians	8	2	23	26	15	24	2
Poles	17	4	35	36	4	3	1
Belarusians	17	7	36	30	5	4	1
Germans	25	10	30	24	4	5	2

\* **Choices:** 1 – liking and interest; 2 – full trust, 3 – generally positive attitude, 4 – ordinary, as one would treat an Armenian or a person of any other nation, 5 – generally negative attitude, 6 – no trust, 7 – dislike or even some hostility

The comparative analysis of the responses shows that the attitudes towards all the national minorities are generally positive or the same as towards representatives of any other nation. There is particular attention and interest in relation to Jews (21%), Greeks (23%), and Germans (25%). At the same time, Armenians do not have full trust towards any national minority. There is relatively more trust in the Russians (15%). Armenians do not have an overall negative attitude towards any national minority, although there is a trend in relation to Kurds (20%), and somewhat more of a lack of trust in the Georgians (24%) than in the other ethnic groups. Armenians have minimal dislike and hostility towards any national minority.

The vast majority (32%) of the respondents were not aware of whether or not national minorities' rights are encroached upon in Armenia. About as many (33%) thought that national minorities' rights are not at all encroached upon in Armenia. However, 35% of the respondents considered that national minorities' rights are encroached upon in Armenia. Within the latter group, though, there were differences: 11% thought that such encroachments are regular, while 24% said it happens occasionally.

Social distance from national minorities varies from the closest of relations to their absence. The breakdown is presented below (Table 2).

**Table 2**

Social Distance from Representatives of Other Nations (in %)

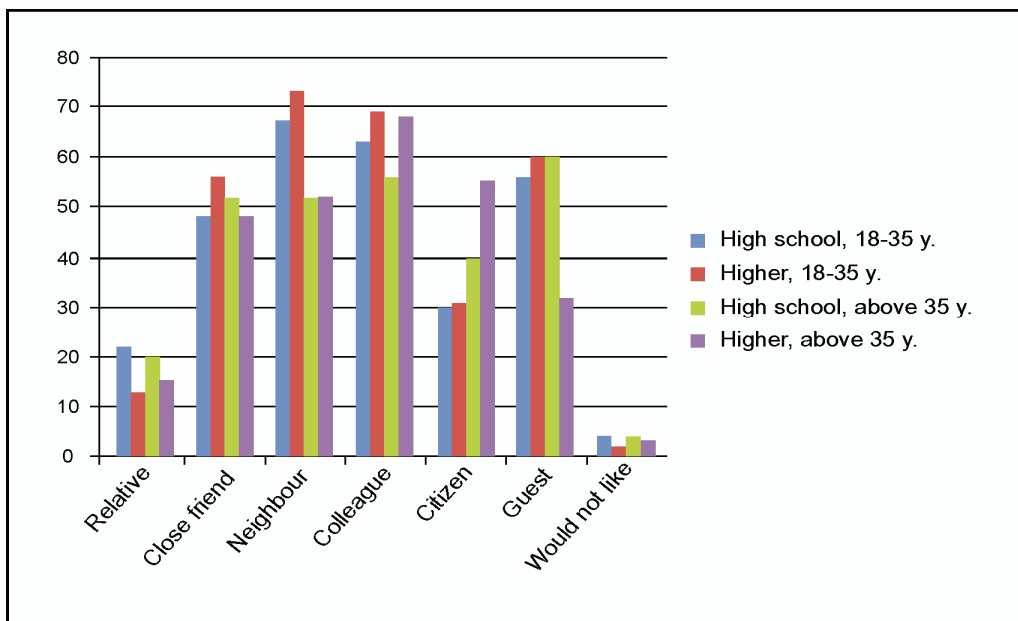
	Distance	Female	Male
1.	Relative (family member/spouse or relative)	17	14
2.	Close friend	50	36
3.	Neighbour	61	72
4.	Colleague/work partner	66	65
5.	Citizen of my country	41	38
6.	Guest (tourist) in my country	49	59
7.	Do not want to see them in our country	3	8

A significant percentage of both men and women were generally ready to establish rather close relations with representatives of other nations, but are

not ready to accept them at the closest distance, i.e. as a close relative or family member. The majority of both men and women were ready to see representatives of other nations as neighbours and colleagues, i.e. to have some relations at an “average” distance. Women are readier than men to accept representatives of other nations as close friends. A large share of both women and men (around 50%) would like to see representatives of other nations as guests in their country. Fewer women and men would like to see representatives of other nations as citizens of Armenia. Finally, a small percentage of both women and men would not like to receive representatives of other nations in their country in any capacity whatsoever.

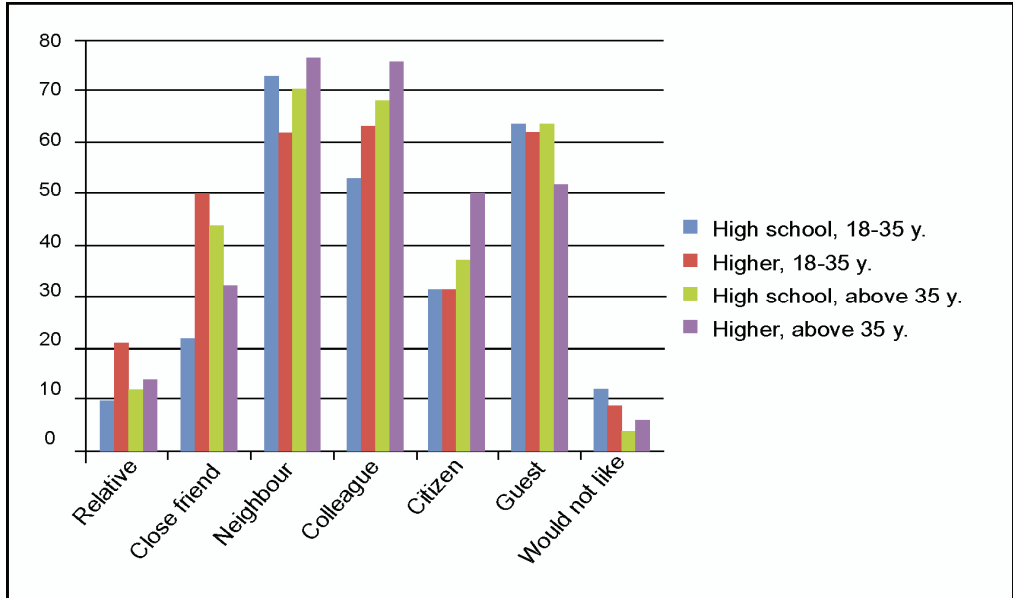
The different positions of men and women on social distance towards representatives of other nations depending on their age and education are presented below (histograms 1.1 and 1.2).

### Women



**Histogram 1.1 Women’s Social Distance towards Representatives of Other Nations**

## Men



**Histogram 1.2 Men's Social Distance towards Representatives of Other Nations**

About 50% or more of the young and middle-age women, as well as women with high school and higher (university) education would be able to accept representatives of other nations as close friends, neighbours, colleagues, or guests in their country, while only about 30% of middle-age women with higher education would like to see representatives of other nations as guests in their country. About 30-40% of the women could see representatives of other nations as citizens of Armenia, compared to over 50% of middle-age women with higher education.

Over 50% of the young and middle-age men, as well as men with high school and higher (university) education would be able to accept representatives of other nations as neighbours, colleagues, or guests in their country, while about 50% of young men with higher education would like to see representatives of other nations as close friends, and about 50% of middle-age men with higher education could see representatives of other nations as citizens of Armenia.

Table 3 presents the preferences of different categories of men and women as to the acceptable social distance to representatives of other nations.

**Table 3**

Women's and Men's First Choice of Social Distance from Representatives of  
Other Nations

	Rank	Women		Men	
		Dis- tance	Status	Dis- tance	Status
High school, 18-35 y.	1	3	Neighbour	3	Neighbour
Higher education, 18-35 y.	1	3	Neighbour	3 4 6	Neighbour Colleague Guest
High school, above 35 y.	1	6	Guest	3	Neighbour
Higher education, above 35 y.	1	4	Colleague	3 4	Neighbour Colleague

Thus, both women and men would prefer to have relations with representatives of other nations at an average distance, mostly as neighbours and colleagues. Middle-age women with high school education are the only exception, as their first choice was the status of a guest in their country for representatives of other nations.

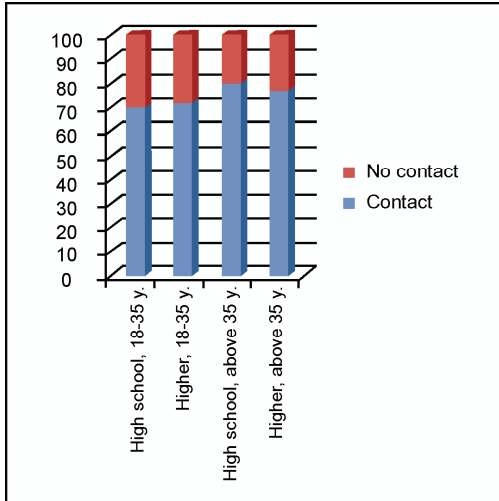
The majority of both women and men have had chances to interact with representatives of other nations. The quantitative picture is presented below (Table 4 and histograms 2.1 and 2.2).

**Table 4**

Quantitative Picture of Respondents' Contacts with National Minorities (%)

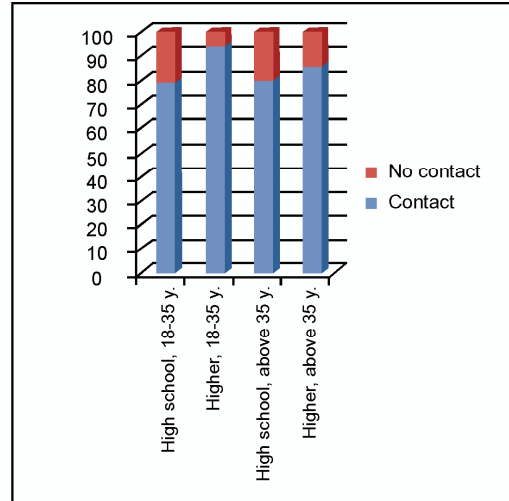
Had contact with representatives of national minorities		Did not have contact with representatives of national minorities	
Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
82	84	18	16

### Women



**Histogram 2.1**

### Men



**Histogram 2.2**

Thus, the majority of the respondents had been in contact with representatives of other nations, but the results show that young men with higher education had the most frequent contacts with representatives of national minorities (over 90%).

According to the results, the contacts and communication with representatives of national minorities was mostly indirect in the form of the presence of a person of another nationality in a familiar environment (41% of the respondents) (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

### Type of Contact with Representatives of National Minorities

Type of Contact	%
Work-related	23
Friendly	29
Indirect	41
Work-related, friendly, and indirect	2
Work-related and indirect	4
Friendly and indirect	1

Some (about 30%) of the respondents had been in work-related and friendly contacts with national minorities.

As for the frequency of encounters, Table 6 shows that over half (54%) of the respondents had rarely been in contact with representatives of national minorities. Some (35%) of the respondents interact with foreigners rather frequently, and only 11% do so almost on a daily basis.

**Table 6**

**Frequency of Encounters with Representatives of National Minorities**

Frequency of Encounters	%
Virtually every day	11
Rather frequently	35
Rarely	54

The respondents that had not interacted with representatives of national minorities at all (18% of the female and 16% of the male respondents) explained it by the lack of suitable occasions. This explanation was cited by a considerable share (68%) of the respondents. 10% of the respondents said they would like to interact with representatives of national minorities, but would feel unusual and uncomfortable around them. 15% of the respondents explained the lack of any contact with national minorities by the fact that they simply did not need to establish such relations; only 7% avoided any encounter with representatives of national minorities.

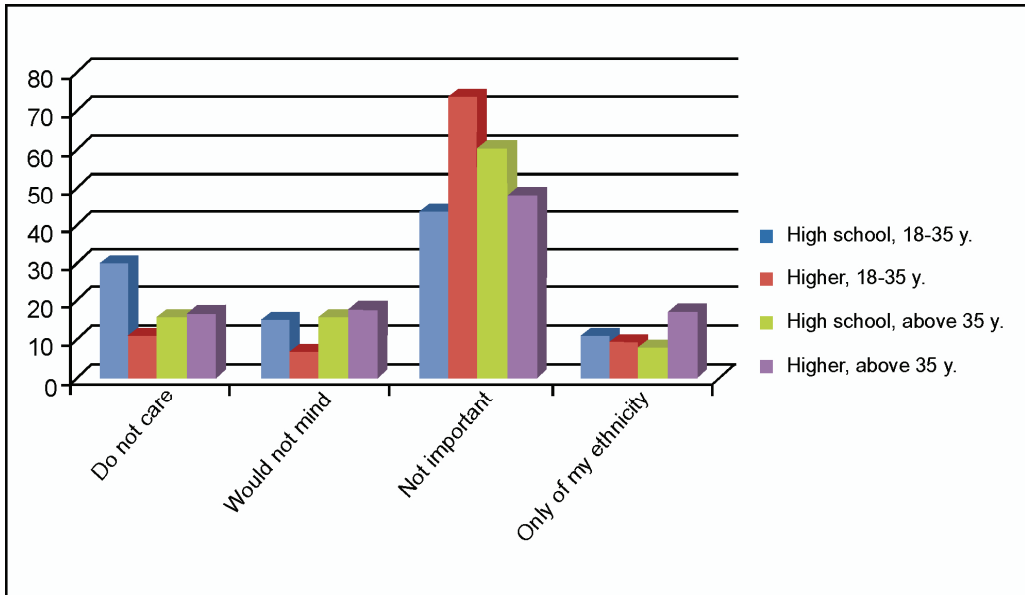
The relationship between supervisors and their subordinates at the workplace is an indicator of interethnic tolerance. The respondents' positions on having a supervisor who is of different ethnicity are presented in numbers below in Table 7 and histograms 3.1 and 3.2.

**Table 7**

**Positions of Respondents on Having a Supervisor of Different Ethnicity**

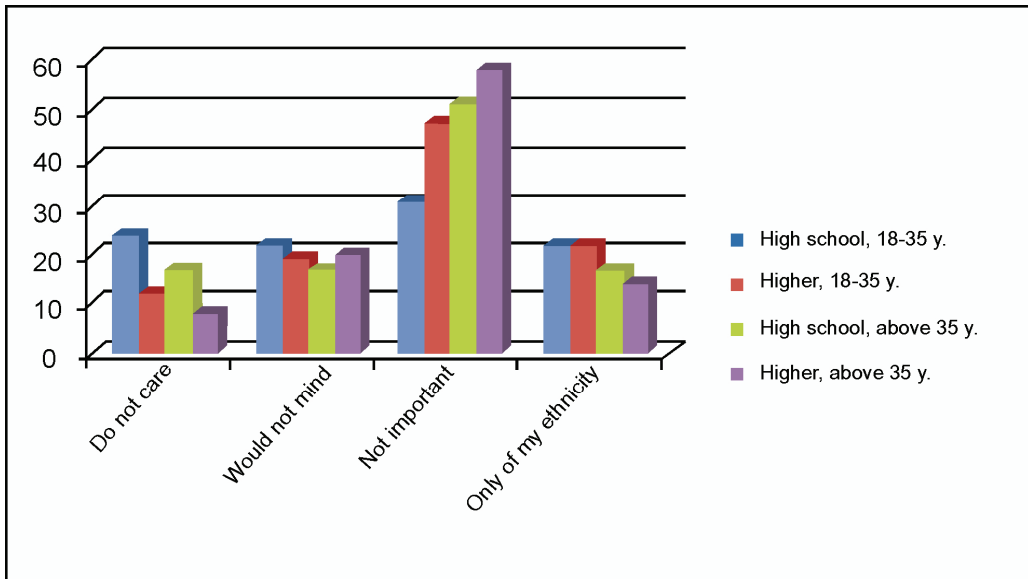
Positions	%
Do not care	16
Would prefer a supervisor of the same ethnicity, but would not mind if someone of a different ethnicity were appointed	17
Ethnicity does not matter, as long as the person is a good supervisor	52
Would prefer a supervisor of the same ethnicity	15

## Women



**Histogram 3.1**

## Men



**Histogram 3.2**

The majority of the respondents would find a supervisor of another ethnicity acceptable. Most (52%) of the respondents noted that ethnicity does not matter at work, as long as the supervisor deserves his position and is produc-

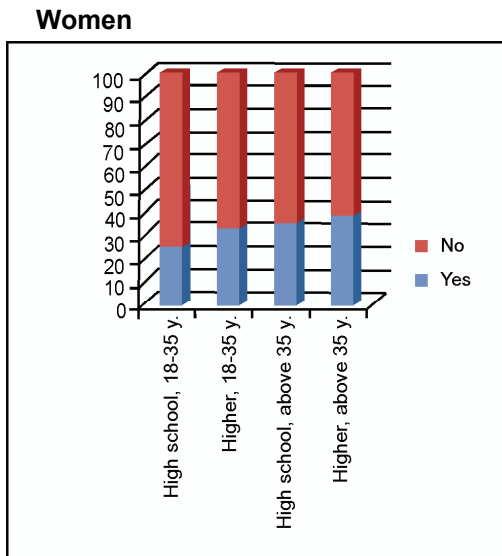


tively performing his or her functions. 17% of the respondents would prefer a supervisor of the same ethnicity, but would not mind if a representative of a different nation were appointed as his or her supervisor. 16% of the respondents were completely indifferent as to who their supervisor would be and of what ethnicity. Only 15% of the respondents would prefer their supervisor to be of the same ethnicity.

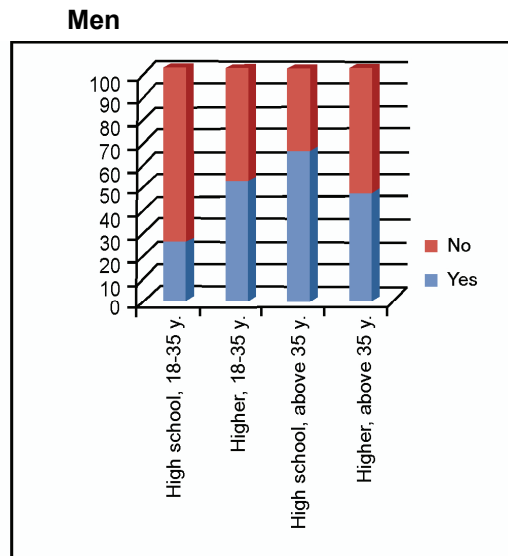
Clearly, both women and men primarily focus on the professionalism and competence of the supervisor: this position was expressed frequently by young women with higher education (about 72%) and middle-age men with higher education (about 58%).

Thus, the ethnicity of the supervisor is not a significant factor for the majority of the respondents, and they are tolerant in this respect.

41% of the respondents agreed and 59% disagreed with the following statement: “**All means are acceptable for defending the interests of my nation.**” A considerable percentage of the respondents are ethnocentric. The differences between men and women in relation to this question are presented in histograms 4.1 and 4.2 below.



**Histogram 4.1**



**Histogram 4.2**

There were no major differences between women on this belief, as opposed to the men. The majority (about 70%) of young and middle-age women with high school and higher education did not agree with the aforementioned statement. As for the men, the majority (60%) of the middle-age men

with high school education agreed with the statement, which illustrates that they are highly ethnocentric, whereas middle-age men with high school education mostly (over 80%) did not agree with the same statement.

The responses varied interestingly when the respondents were asked how they felt about marriages between persons of different ethnicities. Many (44%) of the respondents were tolerant of Armenians marrying representatives of other nations. 34% of the respondents were tolerant, noting that ethnicity played a minimal role in marriage as long as the spouses respected each other’s culture and traditions. 8% of the respondents thought that ethnicity played absolutely no role in marriage. However, 38% of the respondents would prefer marriage with representatives of their nation, but would not strongly object, if it happened in their family, so were somewhat tolerant. 24% of the respondents were categorically intolerant of mixed marriages on the ground that such marriages contributed to the “elimination of the nation.” Finally, 2% of the respondents precluded marriage with a Muslim.

Territorial perceptions also serve as an indicator of tolerance: they are related to a person’s beliefs about having the right to settle and reside anywhere in the world. The findings in respect of this indicator are presented below in two contradictory statements (for the breakdown of responses, see Table 7).

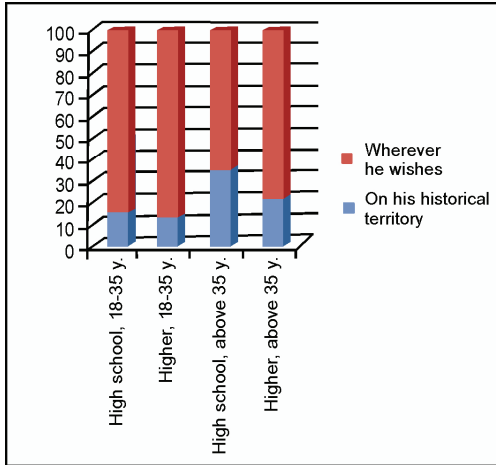
**Table 7**

Representatives of any nation should live in the historical territory of their ancestors	Everyone has the right to choose where in the world he or she would like to live
24%	76%

Clearly, the majority of the respondents agreed that everyone has the right to choose a country in which to live.

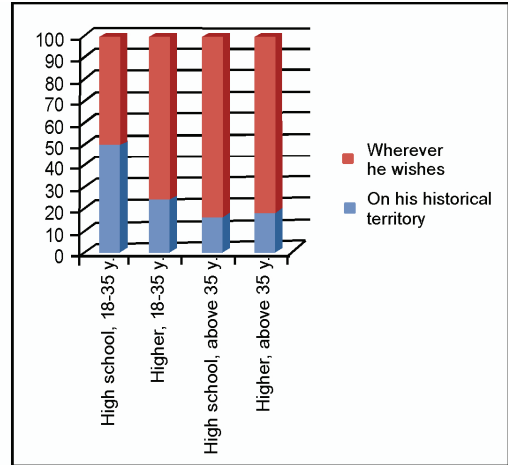
The views of women and men generally did not differ much on this point (see histograms 5.1 and 5.2). Both the women and the men agreed that a person may choose where he or she wishes to live. Nevertheless, some trends were observed in the responses of women and men to this question.

### Women



**Histogram 5.1**

### Men



**Histogram 5.2**

Middle-age women with high school education tended to agree more that representatives of each nation should live in the historical territory of their ancestors (about 30%). This belief was held by about 35% of young men with high school education.

## Summary

The following conclusions can be reached on the basis of the analysis of the interethnic tolerance indicators above:

1. The population of Armenia has generally positive attitudes towards representatives of national minorities and has no hostile feelings towards the representatives of any minority. There are certain trends of extremely positive and extremely negative attitudes: there is heightened interest in the Jews, Greeks, and the Germans; there is a lack of trust in the Georgians; and more negative attitudes towards the Kurds. The population of Armenia does not trust ethnic minorities, but the comparative analysis shows relatively more trust in the Russians.

2. Some of the respondents are not aware of any infringements of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities; others think that such rights are generally not infringed upon in Armenia, with the exception of rare cases.

3. The majority of the respondents are ready to establish relations with the representatives of other nations, but such relations would not enjoy much trust or closeness. The majority of the respondents is not ready to accept the representatives of other nations at either social "pole," i.e. either in the capacity of family members or completely outside of Armenia. The majority of Armenia's population would accept a representative of a different nation as a neighbour, colleague, and guest, and to a lesser degree as a close friend and citizen of Armenia. In contrast to the men, women were readier to establish close relations with representatives of other nations as long as they did not cross the boundaries of family and friendship.

4. The majority of the respondents do have contact with representatives of other nations, but such contacts are indirect and unintended, often triggered by occasions. The majority of the respondents rarely come into contact with representatives of other nations, but there is no special intention to avoid certain relations with them, either.

5. At work, the ethnic factor does not affect the relationship between supervisors and subordinates. The majority of the respondents primarily focus on the professionalism and competence of the supervisor as important factors at the workplace.

6. The involvement in the ethnic discourse generally does not lean towards ethnocentrism, though the latter may be manifested in some part of the population in connection with various social and political problems underlining the need to protect the national interests. In contrast to women, men are more

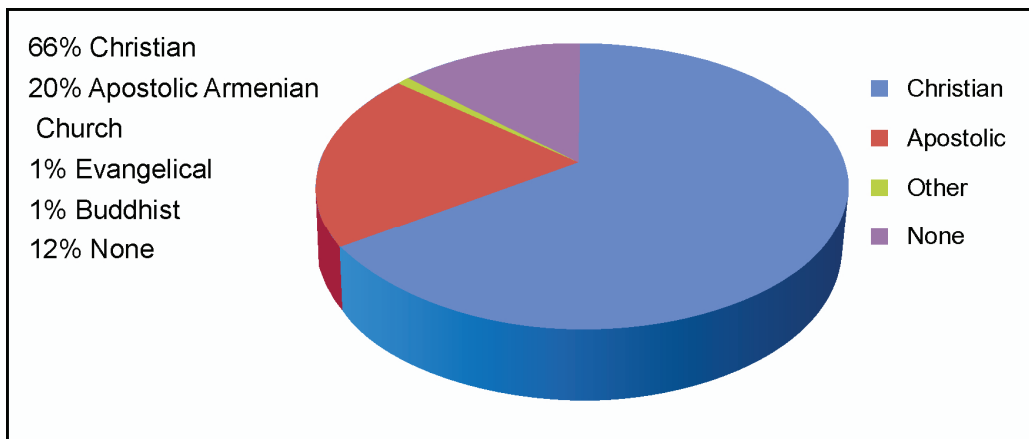
likely to act in the national interests; this trend is particularly visible among above-middle-age men with high school education.

7. While Armenian society is generally tolerant of mixed marriages, there is a trend to prefer marriage with a representative of the same nation.

8. The majority of the respondents agree with the statement that a person has the right choose the country of his or her residence. The position of above-middle-age women with high school education and middle-age men on this point was somewhat different.

### 3.2.2. Attitudes of Yerevan Residents towards Various Religious Denominations and Religious Minorities

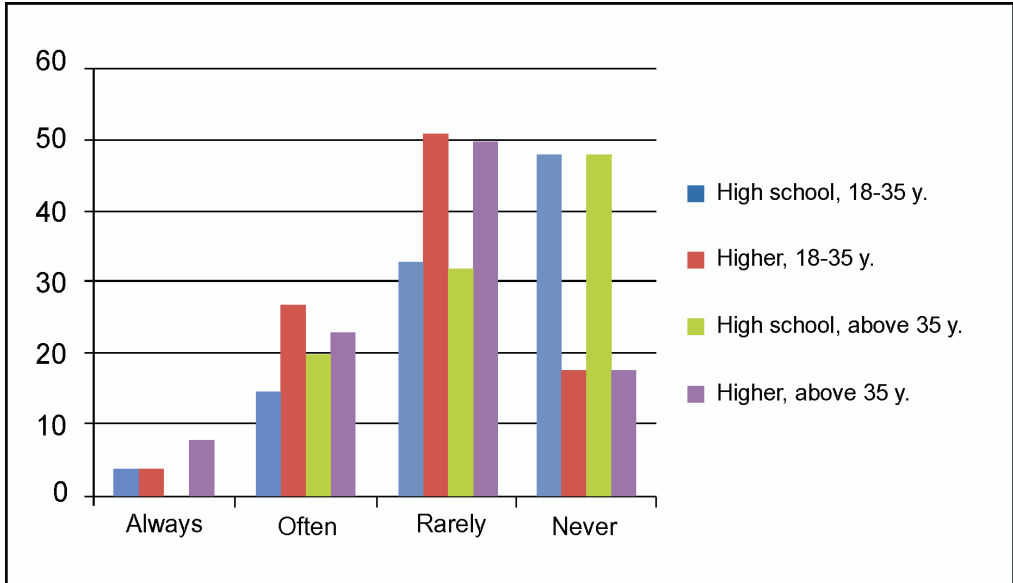
When asked which religion they belonged to in their opinion, the vast majority (66%) of the respondents said they were Christian; another 20% said they belonged to the Apostolic Armenian Church.



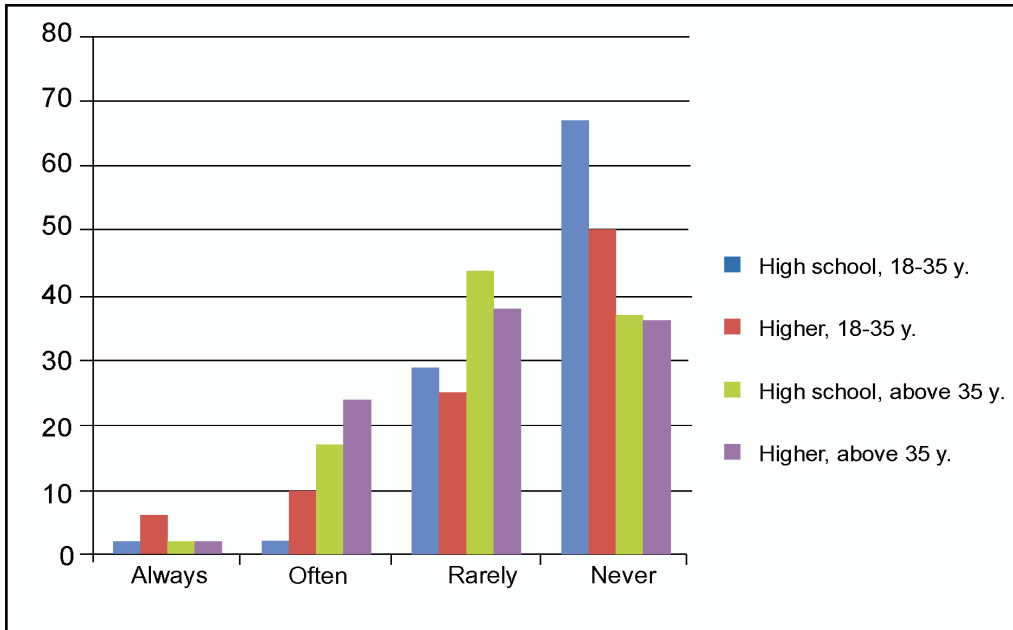
About 40% of the respondents said they did not participate in any religious ceremony, while another 40% participated rarely.

The charts below illustrate that 18-35 year-old women with higher education most frequently participate in ceremonies, while men of the same age with high school education virtually did not participate in any religious service.

## Women



## Men



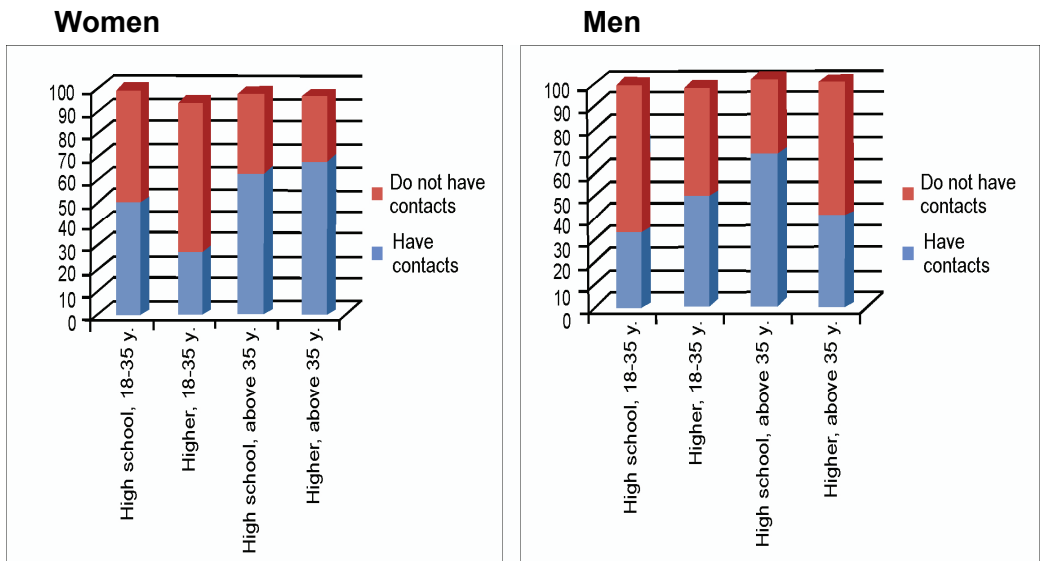
According to the survey findings, Yerevan residents generally had two different types of attitudes to other religions: 52% of the respondents were not

sympathetic of other religious denominations, and the remaining 48% were sympathetic of other religious denominations.

The majority of Yerevan residents would be ready to accept a representative of another religion only as a guest. 16% had absolutely no desire to see representatives of other religions in Armenia. 5% could accept them as neighbours, 6% as colleagues, and only 2% as relatives or family members.

51% of the respondents had or currently have contacts with representatives of religious minorities: of this group, 51% did not feel any tension, while 49% experienced some tension in the contact with representatives of religious minorities, had much difficulty, or were completely unable to interact with them.

49% of Yerevan residents had never had any contact with representatives of religious minorities. 34% said they consciously avoided such contacts.



The majority of the respondents (57%) were convinced that clashes between people of different faiths were inevitable.

49% felt negatively about the fact that one could change his or her faith and considered that anyone should practice the religion of their ancestors, which is accepted in their state. Another 38% thought that anyone is free in their choice, while 15% of Yerevan residents had difficulty answering the question.

34% considered that it would be impermissible for their close ones to marry people of other religions. 36% would prefer their close one marrying

people of the same religion. 29% thought that religion did not play a role in marriage as long as the spouses respected each other’s religious feelings.

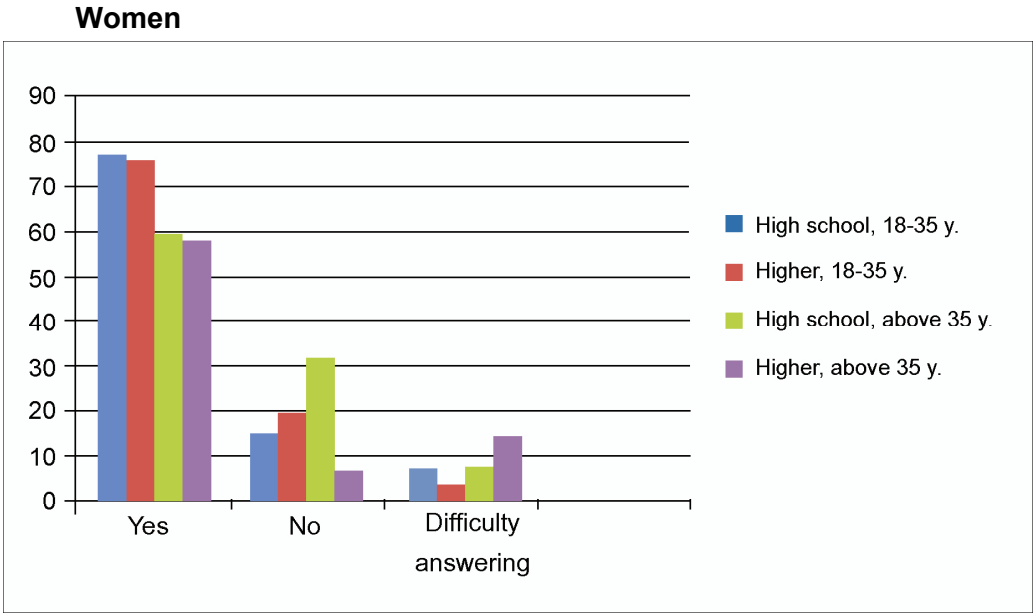
The respondents generally defined the term “sectarian” as “a person who has been lost, deviated from the path of the Apostolic Armenian Church,” or “a person who tries to diverge followers of the Apostolic Armenian Church from the right path,” or “a person who threatens the Armenian identity and Armenian statehood.”

The respondents would generally act in the following way in relation to people of other religions:

1. Leave them alone and not interfere with their activities (38%);
2. Interact with them, as one would interact with any person (30%);
3. Help them, because they are lost (17%); and
4. Isolate them from society, because their activities are dangerous (12%).

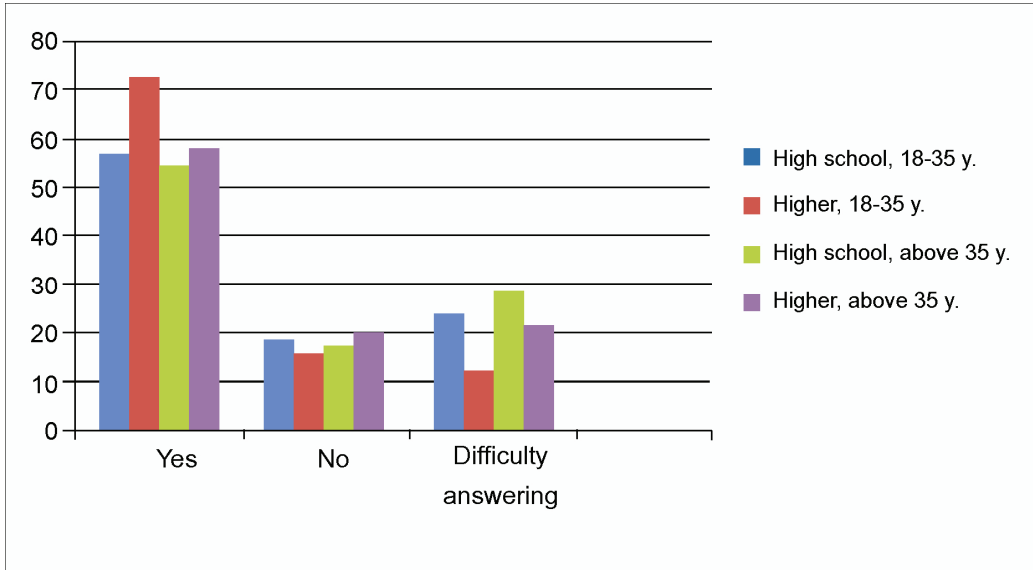
Despite the ambivalent attitudes towards representatives of religious minorities and some cases of obvious intolerance, 67% of Yerevan residents surveyed were convinced that children should be raised to be tolerant of people with other religious denominations.

***Do you think that children should be raised to be tolerant of people with other religious denominations?***





## Men



### Summary

1. The vast majority of the respondents either did not participate or rarely participated in religious ceremonies or service.

2. 52% of the respondents were sympathetic of other religious denominations, and the remaining 48% were not.

3. 50% of Yerevan residents had or currently have different types of contacts with representatives of other religions. However, half of them feel some tension in such contacts.

4. The majority of Yerevan residents would be ready to accept a representative of another religion only in the capacity of a guest.

5. 57% of Yerevan residents were convinced that clashes between people of different faiths were inevitable.

6. 49% felt negatively about the fact that one could change his or her faith. 15% had difficulty answering this question.

7. Only 29% thought that religion did not play a role in marriage as long as the spouses respected each other's religious feelings.

8. 67% were convinced that children should be raised to be tolerant of people with other religions.

Interviewer (code) \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONNAIRE \_\_\_\_\_

**II. The questions in this part of the questionnaire attempt to study your attitudes towards national minorities living in the Republic of Armenia.**

**1. It would be possible and desirable for me to accept a representative of a national minority as: (mark three responses)**

1. A relative (e.g. family member, spouse, or other relative)
2. A close friend
3. A neighbour
4. A colleague/work partner
5. A citizen of my country
6. A guest/tourist in my country
7. I would not like to see him in my country

**2. How do you generally feel about national minorities living in Armenia?**

*(Mark the table with your attitude towards each national minority using the numerical ranking presented below.)*

- 1 - liking and interest
- 2 – full trust
- 3 – generally positive
- 4 – ordinary, as an Armenian or a person of any other nation
- 5 – generally negative
- 6 – no trust
- 7 – dislike or even some hostility

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jews							
Assyrians							
Kurds							
Greeks							
Russians							

Yezidis							
Ukrainians							
Georgians							
Poles							
Belarusians							
Germans							

**3. Do you interact or have you had a chance to interact with representatives of national minorities?**

- Yes (go to question 4)
- No (go to question 6)

**4. If yes, what was the nature of the interaction?**

- Work
- Friendly
- Interacted or currently interact indirectly in a familiar environment

**5. How frequently do you encounter them?**

- Almost every day
- Rather frequently
- Rarely

**6. If no, what is the reason? (Mark only one response.)**

- I don't feel the need to interact
- I avoid dealing with them
- I have not had the occasion to interact
- I would like to interact, but I would feel unusual and uncomfortable around them

**7. How would you feel if your direct supervisor were a representative of another nation? (Mark only one response.)**

- It is all the same to me

- I would prefer if my supervisor were of my nationality, but I would not mind if a representative of another nation were appointed as my supervisor
- Ethnicity does not matter as long as you have a good supervisor
- I would prefer a supervisor of my nationality

**8. Would you consider yourself a person who has the following convictions?**

***“All means are acceptable for defending the interests of my nation.”***

- Yes
- No

**9. What would be your attitude, if your family member (child, sister, or brother) or other close relative married a representative of another nation? (Mark only one response.)**

- I think that such marriages are undesirable, because they contribute to the elimination of the nation
- I would prefer if he or she married a representative of my nation, but would not object
- The impact of nationality on marriage is minimal as long as the spouses respect each other's culture
- Ethnicity is absolutely irrelevant in matters of marriage
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Do you think that the rights of national minorities are infringed upon in Armenia?**

- Yes, they are, and it happens regularly
- Yes, they are, occasionally
- They are not
- I am not informed

**11. Which of the convictions below is more acceptable to you?**

- Representatives of any nation should live in the historical territory of their ancestors

- Everyone has the right to choose where in the world he or she would like to live

**II. The questions in this part of the questionnaire attempt to study your attitudes towards religious minorities living in the Republic of Armenia.**

**1. Which religious denomination do you follow in your opinion?**

---

**2. Do you participate in different religious ceremonies?**

- Yes, always  
 Frequently  
 Rarely  
 No, I do not

**3. Are there religious denominations towards which you are not sympathetic?**

- Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no (*go to question 4*)  
 No (*go to question 4*)

*(Please, specify them and the reasons for your attitude.)*

---

---

**4. It would be possible and desirable for me to accept a person with another denomination (a follower of another religious denomination) as:**  
*(mark only one response)*

- A relative (e.g. family member, spouse, or other relative)  
 A close friend  
 A neighbour  
 A colleague/work partner  
 A citizen of my country  
 A guest/tourist in my country  
 I would not like to see him in my country

**5. Do you interact or have you had a chance to interact with representatives of religious minorities?**

Yes (*please, specify the religious minority*)

\_\_\_\_\_ (*go to question 6*)

No (*go to question 7*)

**6. If yes, do you get along in your relations with people belonging to other religious denominations?**

Yes, without any difficulty

Yes, but I feel some tension in my interaction with them

It is very difficult for me to interact with them

No, I cannot interact with them

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**7. If no, what is the reason?**

I have no desire to interact with them

I avoid dealing with them

I have not had the occasion to interact

I would like to interact, but they have different views of the world, and I would feel unusual around them

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Do you think that clashes between people of different faiths are inevitable?**

Yes

Rather yes

Rather no

No

Difficulty answering

**9. How would you feel about someone changing his or her religious denomination?**

Negatively, because anyone should practice the religion of their ancestors, which is accepted in their state

Easily, because I think that anyone is free in their choice of religion

Difficulty answering

**10. Do you think that children should be raised to be tolerant of people with other religious denominations?**

- Yes
- No
- Difficulty answering

**11. How would you feel if your relative (family member or other relative) married someone with a different religion?**

- I think such marriages are impermissible
- I would prefer someone of my religion, but would not object if it happened otherwise
- Religion does not play a role in marriage as long as the spouses respect each others' religious feelings
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**12. How do you think people with other religious denominations (religious minorities) should be treated?**

- Isolate them from society, because their activities are dangerous
- Help them, because they are lost
- Leave them alone and not interfere with their activities
- Interact with them, as one would interact with any person
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**13. How do you understand the word "sectarian"?** *(Mark one response.)*

- A person who has been lost, deviated from the path of the Apostolic Armenian Church
- A person who has simply chosen another religious teaching and follows it
- A person who tries to diverge followers of the Apostolic Armenian Church from the right path
- A person who threatens the Armenian identity and Armenian statehood
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**

