

## The Numbers Talk

At least one  
in three women...



According to UN data, at least one in three women in the world is subjected to violence during her lifetime, 750 million women are married before the age of 18, and 250 million are subjected to genital mutilation. Of the women who die as a result of violence each year, 50% are killed by a spouse or family member.

Two cases of domestic  
violence are recorded  
in Armenia each day



According to Armenian police data, 3,571 cases of domestic violence were registered between 2012 and 2016, meaning law enforcement agencies received reports related to at least two cases a day. In the first nine months of 2017, 602 cases were recorded, that is to say the trend not only continued, it increased. While these are the official numbers, domestic violence is characterized by a high level of latency. Many victims of domestic violence do not appeal to law enforcement agencies for numerous reasons, most importantly due to stereotypes. During 2016, phone calls related to domestic violence made to NGO hot lines reached 5,000.

17% of murders  
are a result of  
domestic violence



According to data by the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia, homicides due to domestic violence made up 17% of all registered murders in 2015. According to NGO data, 50 women were killed as a result of domestic violence between 2010 and 2017.

At least 140 countries  
have legislation on  
domestic violence



UN Women's data shows that in August of 2017, at least 140 countries in the world had special laws for the prevention and fight against violence. It is mainly in some African and Middle Eastern countries that domestic violence is not legislatively regulated.

# Woman & politics

"I saw  
everything,  
I saw how dad  
stabbed mom to  
death, and he  
stabbed and  
stabbed mom..."



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Photo: Courtesy of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women

## "A decent, strong family is not founded on violence"

"I cannot agree that beating a woman or a child is our national custom. It goes against our national customs, because a decent, strong Armenian family is not founded on violence," said Armenia's Minister of Justice, Davit Harutyunyan, to concerns about the domestic violence draft law allegedly contradicting Armenian customs.

The draft law on "Preventing violence in the family, protecting the victims of violence in the family, and restoring the harmony in the family." The draft law is currently being circulated in Armenia's National Assembly. Upon the Government's suggestion, this draft law has been considered urgent and will be included in the agenda of the National Assembly's special session to be convened on December 12, 2017.

The draft law, which was first presented to the public in September of this year, has undergone changes to ease concerns voiced during public discussions. Suggestions made by women's organizations dealing with the issue were also taken into consideration, though only a part of their concerns were addressed.

First of all, the title of the draft law was changed. Formerly, it was called "Preventing Violence in the Family, Protecting the Victims of Violence in the Family." The addition of the posi-

tively veiled message "Restoring the Harmony in the Family" apparently aims to neutralize the accusations the draft law was "destroying the family" voiced earlier by opponents.

According to Armenia's Minister of Justice, Davit Harutyunyan, the change in the draft law's title is closely related to its objectives. "Before that, the adoption of the law pursued two objectives: One of prevention and the other of protection. Now, during the discussion stage, the third objective was added, namely that of restoring harmony in the family," he said.

To rule out different interpretations, the draft has clarified terms deemed problematic, such as those of physical, economic, and psychological violence. The types of domestic violence now also include neglect, i.e. "intentional disregard by a parent or lawful guardian of the minimum conditions necessary for a child's life (food, clothes, shelter, access to medical care and services, education), if the parent or the lawful

guardian has the relevant information and means and if the appropriate services are accessible to them."

The draft law envisions three main defenses for the protection of victims: Early warning, urgent intervention and protection determination. The goal is to protect the victims of domestic violence from perpetrators and to prevent future violence. Davit Harutyunyan says that the draft law has outlined a few conditions for the perpetrator, for example, to maintain a certain distance from the victim, to not contact the victim, to not carry or keep weapons, to take a rehabilitation course, for example, for alcoholism, etc. According to him, defense mechanisms also imply limitations and violations will be met with criminal liability and administrative responsibility. "In the case of urgent interventions, the victim's consent is not mandatory since very often victims are subjected to more violence when they submit complaints," said the Minister. In Davit Harutyunyan's words, the draft law envisions the creation of two institutions: support centers and shelters. A Council on the Prevention of Domestic Violence will be formed and it will include representatives from the

Government, including law enforcement bodies, NGOs, and employees of the support centers and shelters, as well as representatives from the Office of the Human Rights Defender. Davit Harutyunyan also noted that there is a need for raising awareness and for police officers to receive training. "Essentially, serious work lies ahead but the important thing is the law. We consider the goal that we have set very important."

According to the Minister's views, there is a movement opposing the draft law, which attempts to present regulations missing in the draft law as legislative shortcomings. "I must once again state that the draft law does not envisage a new norm or new basis for deprivation or limitation of parental rights," he said, adding that the draft law had undergone a number of serious, important changes to remove issues of concern. "For example, the child cannot be taken away from the family and placed in a shelter without the parent. We have clearly stated that in the draft to stop unfounded criticism, which is often voiced with respect to the draft law," emphasized Davit Harutyunyan.

## 16 Days of Activism Launched

## Painting the World Orange Once Again

On November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence was launched, which will continue until December 10th, which is International Human Rights Day. This year, the 16-day event is being organized under the overarching theme "Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls." Like in previous years, orange will be the key color uniting all actions and focusing public attention on the problem of violence against women and girls. All activities for this year's 16 Days of Activism aim to shed light on one of the main visions of the 2030 Agenda, namely "a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met."





## Voice of a Multitude

One in four people agrees that "in certain cases, a woman deserves being beaten."



According to the results of a sociological survey titled Men and Gender Equality in Armenia conducted by the UNFPA in 2016, Armenian society is inclined to justify violence against women:

- 27.7% of respondents agreed with the statement "in certain cases, a woman deserves being beaten" i.e. One in four people among those surveyed justifies violence.
- 35.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement "a woman should tolerate violence for the sake of family preservation."
- 55.4% of respondents agreed with the statement that "if a woman cheats on a man, he may then hit her."
- 32.2% of those surveyed agreed with the statement that "if a woman is raped, it must be because she has done something to put herself in such a situation."

According to the survey data, 45.9% of women have confessed that they are subjected to psychological violence by their partners; 21.3% have responded that they are subjected to economic violence; and 12.5% to physical violence. As far as the men are concerned, a larger proportion confessed that they subject women to different types of violence.

When asked whether they maintain control over their partners, 95.5% of the men responded "yes."

### Were you subjected to childhood violence?



Twenty-seven point two percent of men surveyed responded that before age 18, they were subjected to physical violence at home, 10.9% to psychological violence, 3.5% to sexual violence, and 1% have responded that they felt neglected and abandoned. According to experts, men subjected to violence before age 18 are more likely to subject women to violence.

### Four out of ten women subjected to violence have never appealed for help

According to the recently released report Armenia Demographic and Health Survey 2015-2016, 29% of women subjected to physical or sexual violence appealed for help to stop the violence; an equal amount of women never appealed for help, but told someone about the violence; and four out of ten women subjected to physical or sexual violence never appealed for help and never told anyone about the violence that occurred.

### "If we are a society without violence, why should we be deprived of our children?"

"If we are a society without violence, who is going to deprive us of our children? In families, where there is love and harmony, would a police officer come and take away the child? If we create a moral society where there is no violence, this law will remain a dead letter. If I have a healthy family, am a loving father, an affectionate spouse, a loving child, and I love and am loved, which provision of the law on prevention of domestic violence or whatever other law can harm me!? So, do not create imaginary monsters, do not fight against imaginary monsters, be tolerant of each other, do not see an enemy in each other and moreover, do not see conspiracy among yourselves."

Bishop Mikael Ajapahyan, Head of Shirak Diocese

### "Do not look for conspiracies in this draft law..."

"Some look for conspiracies in this law, but conspiracies occur in hidden corners, not within the framework of public hearings, especially in this case when the law has long been publicized and thousands of people have familiarized themselves with it and have come up with hundreds of questions and suggestions, which suggests public demand for this law. Meanwhile, an accusation is sounded that the public demand for the law has been shaped under the influence of external forces. To this extent, the Republic of Armenia has joined a number of UN international agreements to protect human rights, and under those agreements, we have committed ourselves to a number of obligations. These agreements also include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which has a Committee, whose membership includes representatives of different states, and, by the way, the majority of members are from non-Western countries. The Committee issues recommendations for the states and there is a similar recommendation in connection with this law, too. So, there is nothing new or sensational here."

Vigen Kocharyan, Deputy Minister of Justice of Armenia

### "The investigator said, 'Get up and go, he is your husband; if he beats you, you should obey.'"

"The biggest problem is that women subjected to violence do not know what they should do after escaping an environment of fear and humiliation. For them, the main issue is that they do not feel like their children and they themselves are protected under the law. For me, the most difficult thing was



when the investigator came and said, 'What are you going to do? Go and live with him, it is OK, he is your husband; women in all families put up with it when their husbands beat them.' I ran away from home during the night to save my life, leaving my children behind. For months after that, I was unable to see them or talk with them. Their father said that 'When you go and drop the criminal charges by stating that I have not beaten you, then you can see your children.' There was no institution where I could knock at the door and say that a mother was being deprived of her children. I did not have a place to stay and was housed at the Women's Support Center, where I was safe. For years I waited for the court's decision about the custody of my children. For three years after the court's decision, employees from the Compulsory Enforcement Service of Judicial Acts would visit my son and ask him, 'Hamlet, do you want to go to your mother?' and he would say 'I don't want.' In this way the Service washed their hands of my case and I, afraid of not seeing my children, put up with this situation for nine years..."

Hasmik Khachatryan

### "Domestic violence is one of the most dangerous offenses."

"Domestic violence decreases in societies where there is gender equality, mechanisms and laws in place to prevent domestic violence which support the victim and punish the perpetrator. Hence, the law should include punitive, protective and preventive interventions, as well as measures for monitoring law enforcement. One of the greatest deficiencies of the law is the fact that violence is not criminalized: Since domestic violence has a number of peculiarities, the punishment cannot be limited by the Criminal Code. Domestic violence is one of the most dangerous offenses since the victim lives with the perpetrator."

Maro Matosyan, founding director of the Women's Support Center

## Protest

## "Customs are not a basis for legal regulation"

Recently, the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women carried out a protest under the theme of "Customs are not a basis for legal regulation" in front of Armenia's Government Building to express its disagreement with conceptual changes made to the domestic violence draft law. Participants of the protest submitted an analytical legal brief with their concerns and considerations to the Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan.



It has been several years since the organizations dealing with the problem of violence against women have been struggling get a law on domestic violence passed, therefore it is not the first and only time that suggestions have been submitted to the draft law presented by the Armenian Government. According to observations made by Women's Support Center lawyer, Nona Galstyan, suggestions made by the Coalition have, more often than not, been refused. For example, the suggestion to criminalize all manifestations of violence and, consequently, to envision criminal responsibilities for them, has not been accepted. Accepted as manifestations of violence, for example, were neglect and forced abortion, as well as the procedure to take on ex officio cases of private accusations.

"The main unacceptable provision for us is that both in the title of the draft law and in the list of its objectives, 'restoring the harmony in

the family' was added. There is no such objective in laws and legal documents regulating the field in international practice," says the lawyer, noting that by this the rights of a person as the highest value are subordinated to the subjective evaluation of "harmony in the family" by other members of society.

In the words of the human rights defender Zara Hovhannisyan, the draft law has strengthened the role of the mediation. "The emphasis is placed on making peace between people, also the term "traditional value" has found its way into the draft law, which is not a legal formulation either. Thus, it will be very difficult to define whether domestic violence occurred in consonance with traditional values, or is it truly a violent act," notes Hovhannisyan.

In Nona Galstyan's opinion, not only is the term "traditional value" not a legal category, but in legal practice it will be absolutely impossible to specify the content of this term since it is

directly related to the person's subjective perception. In practice, this will not only lead to the distortion of the principle of legal certainty, but also to abuse of a number of fundamental human rights," expressed Nona Galstyan.

In the words of NvardPiliposyan, a representative of the Women's Resource Center, the inclusion of the mediation of harmony in the draft law is fraught with dangers for women subjected to violence. "In general, I have a very positive attitude toward the mediation, but it is applicable in cases when the parties have equal standing and can sit at the table and find the best solution for themselves with the help of an impartial third party. However, this draft law suggests to use an mediation in the urgent intervention, or the protective decision phase, when the life or health of the person subjected to violence has already been jeopardized. The mediator suggests a meeting between the two sides. This enables the perpetrator not only to exert pressure on the victim during the meeting, but also, for example, to stalk the victim after leaving the mediation office."

NvardPiliposyan reminds us that after the expiration of the protection period, nobody can prevent the spouses or couples from making peace. "However, one must not take that risk and introduce such an institute during the protection determination period, especially given that it has been just two years since the adoption of the institute of mediation by law. It has not been applied very often so far, and we have few licensed mediators. To what extent will they be able to take into account all the nuances of domestic violence and create such conditions that do not pressure a woman? Taking into consideration the national mentality, when a woman is told that there is such an opportunity, she will somehow feel obliged to take that option."

The above noted and a number of other provisions in the draft law cause concern to the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, which finds the adoption of a law with such content problematic.



Flash survey at the Parliament

"The traditional family is one based on love, trust, and respect, and this law would never apply in such a family"

"In my understanding, the traditional family is one based on love, trust, and mutual respect, and this law would never apply in such a family. Regarding the wording "restoring the harmony in the family" in the title of the draft law, it in no way diminishes the commitment to fight against violence. I believe that at this point the draft law corresponds to international standards and those concerns, which were voiced by the public, have by and large been allayed. As far as the danger of removing children from their families is concerned, I should say that this draft law does not contain such a stipulation. On the contrary, it, as a matter of principle, envisions the priority of the child's interests, and the issue of deprivation or limitation of parental rights was addressed by the Family Law adopted 13 years ago."

ArpineHovhannisyan, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) faction



"This version of the draft law is more acceptable than the previous one..."

"I have stated on numerous occasions in the past that there were points of concern in the draft law and both my colleagues and I came up with suggestions. I can say that the main suggestions voiced by us have been accepted and a few more will be discussed at the National Assembly sessions. However, already today, having familiarized with the altered version, I can say that this version of the draft law is more acceptable than the earlier one..."

Eduard Sharmazanov, Deputy NA Speaker, RPA faction

"It is unacceptable to present domestic violence as the Armenian family model."

"As is known, the National Assembly Committee on European Integration convened parliamentary hearings and in the immediate future, it will also be organizing working discussions to summarize those suggestions that will be presented by members of our committee and other deputies. I find it incomprehensible that an attempt is made to present domestic violence as the Armenian family model: this is absolutely unacceptable. I am sorry that the discussions have followed this track and continue this way today as well. For me, the Armenian family is not a family where there is violence against, and humiliation of, women and children. For me, the Armenian family is the one where there is mutual trust and mutual respect. The fact that the perpetrator, irrespective of who he is, must be punished is unequivocal, but how and what other additional developments this law requires is a matter of discussion."

Naira Zohrabyan, Tsarukyan faction

"Domestic violence is also a matter of a man's dignity"

"There are two reasons for domestic violence: The first one is concerned with a cave mentality at the individual level (since she is my wife, I can do whatever I want) and the second is the same type of mentality at the public level, namely domestic violence is a private matter. This is not the case. Nobody has the right to harm a woman, a child, or a man; domestic violence is not a private matter, at least for the very reason that children subjected to violence go to school, serve in the army, get married, and so this abusive behavior spreads also in public life. That is why this issue should concern everybody, should be discussed, and considered unacceptable and shameful by the public. Parallel to the law, there needs to be public reprehension and intolerance of domestic violence. Men's role too has a great significance in shaping public opinion. The issue of domestic violence is also the issue of men with dignity, will and a sense of responsibility. And especially of those men who are leaders in different areas of life and can influence the shaping of youth's world outlook."

Lena Nazaryan, Yelq faction

It is not a private matter, at least for the very reason that children subjected to violence go to school, serve in the army, get married, and so this abusive behavior spreads also in public life. That is why this issue should concern everybody, should be discussed, and considered unacceptable and shameful by the public. Parallel to the law, there needs to be public reprehension and intolerance of domestic violence. Men's role too has a great significance in shaping public opinion. The issue of domestic violence is also the issue of men with dignity, will and a sense of responsibility. And especially of those men who are leaders in different areas of life and can influence the shaping of youth's world outlook."

Lena Nazaryan, Yelq faction

"It is apparent there is a misunderstanding about the draft law"

"I am against any kind of violence and it doesn't matter whether that violence is committed inside the family or outside it. It is apparent that there is a misunderstanding about the draft law, people perceive its content incorrectly, or not fully. But the Armenian Revolutionary Federation is generally for the law, assuming some amendments are made for which we are planning to come up with suggestions. As to which are, in our opinion, provisions that need to be changed, we will reveal these during discussions: At this point I am not ready to state them since the faction has not discussed the issue yet."

Suren Manukyan, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) faction

"This is not a case where we should be guided by the number of cases of violence - whether they're many or few"

"The discussions of the draft law on prevention of domestic violence have recently truly become one of the top items on our political agenda. Of course, there have been many extreme evaluations too, it became an issue of attempting to transfer the matter to the extent of "to be or not to be," however, common sense and disturbing statistics suggests the problem truly exists, and this is not the case when we should be guided by the number of cases of violence - whether they're many

or few. Each case of violence impacts one or more lives, and we simply do not have the moral right to remain indifferent towards them. With regards to the law, there is a certain information vacuum among the different levels of society, because of which this or that provision is interpreted incorrectly and has certain negative implications. In reality, even preventing one case of violence under this law should be considered an achievement by itself. And contentious points should be reviewed and eliminated through discussions with specialists and representatives of political forces."

Iveta Tonoyan, Tsarukyan faction

"Armenia has long been in need of such a law"

"I believe that Armenia has a need for such a law and has long been in need of it because we have cases when women and children are subjected to pressures and violence in the family, and in reality our legislation is not ready and prepared for such situations. When opponents announce that there is no need for such a law and relevant functions can be carried out on the basis of the Criminal Code, it is necessary to note that the Criminal Code implies more severe punishment for all this, as a result of which the family will hardly be preserved. Whereas the logic and the meaning of the law to be adopted entails preventing the violence and doing everything to preserve the family. The majority of the opponents did not even read the draft law and the parliamentary hearings convened on this topic have abundantly proven that."

Gevorg Gorgisyan, Yelq faction

"I do not consider it right to give way to extremes"

"Of course, Armenia, fortunately, is not ranked among those countries where domestic violence reaches a formidable scale, but the existing statistics point to the fact that there is a problem and it needs to be solved. Tsarukyan faction has not yet taken a final decision on this draft law, but I agree with some of my colleagues that the draft contains problematic provisions, though I do not consider it right to give way to extremes in discussions, trying to qualify not giving ice-cream to a child as domestic violence, or continuously manipulating the issue by calling not to infringe on the Armenian traditional family. After all, we do not have a formula for the "traditional Armenian family," but it is evident that the traditional Armenian family does not imply beating, violence, and moreover, it is not about children experiencing trauma."

Luiza Sargsyan, Tsarukyan faction

"It is a fact that there is a problem to which we can no longer turn a blind eye"

"I am generally against any violence and since in our country too, according to the statistics, the cases of violence are on the rise and especially in families, the state should strengthen and expand preventive measures. And this law can definitely play a positive role. And if there are certain problems, they can be corrected during the discussion on the draft law. But it is a fact that the problem exists also in our families and that it is a problem to which we can no longer turn a blind eye. In Armenia, violence must be ruled out in Armenian families and against children."

Karine Atchemyan, Republican Party of Armenia faction

Top Ten

Funny stories related to the draft law on domestic violence

The public discussions concerning the draft law on domestic violence stood out by the fact that the opponents often crossed the line into the extreme with their arguments. One of the most popular voiced "concerns" was that allegedly "this law will undermine the basis and values of the Armenian traditional family" This concern was followed by comments that "children will be removed from their families and taken to special shelters; that depriving children of sweets will be considered violence; or that the institute of the "fatherly slap" will be destroyed. Another concern emphasized the necessity of fighting against Satan.

Lawyer GevorgGyozalyan has made the following comment regarding these viewpoints presented by the draft opponents, "If we are guided by the presumption of madness, when we take any law, I can say such absurd things that all the laws can be considered null and void."

"We will not allow this law to pass: we will be fighting against Satan"

"There it is written "domestic violence." That is to say, the violence is localized: as if they can say "street violence," "lounge violence," etc. There are no such laws. I am saying that this law can be entitled violence that takes place in the family, but they have taken up associating violence with the family. One of the articles states "moral violence," "psychological violence." For example, if I say to my child 'Eat and then go to school,' and he replies 'No, I do not want to eat,' it means that I have subjected my child to moral violence. Or, if I tell him not to play online and do his homework, I will be blamed for committing psychological violence. How are they going to decide, how are they going to define what is psychological violence? That is to say, they've done things in such a way that whenever they wish they can separate you from your child and take your child to a shelter, where children are sold or used. We will not allow the passage of this law. Now, they are going to start press conferences, public notice; whatever dirty deeds done by Satan should be brought to the surface. We should show the people that they should not follow Satan for them to understand..."



"Depriving a child prone to obesity of pastries will be considered economic violence"

"Parental responsibilities can resemble economic or psychological violence. Depriving a child prone to obesity of pastries in the evening, as well as teaching children to restrain their desires and passions, might be considered such a violence..."

"Let us assume that a parent tells his or her child to behave properly threatening to cut off his/her ears (a figurative informal saying); say, that child is naughty and this situation repeats itself every day. Will this action be viewed as a threat of physical violence?"

"The parent might take away their child's money so that, for example, the latter does not go to a strip club, and that too can be considered economic violence."

"Your life will become a hell"

"A policeman gets the opportunity to transform your life into a hell, after his decision to give you an official warning. During the day, he can visit your house as often as he pleases and you will not be able to refuse, otherwise you will be liable. You might be partying with your colleagues and he might enter and say, 'Have you slapped your wife today or pulled your son's ears [as a punishment]?' Your friends will get surprised and will tell others, 'Do you know what happened at Arthur's home?' and you will be ridiculed at your workplace..."

"They will not take into account the cause for the husband to beat his wife"

"If this law is adopted, once there is a record of violence, the reasons for why the husband beat his wife will not be taken into account."

We should note that theft and murder or corruption could be justified by this very logic. Unfortunately, based on that logic, when violence is justified in society, it is hardly possible to consider that society healthy.



## Through the eyes of a child

# "I saw everything: I saw how dad stabbed mom to death"

According to data from the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, 50 women were killed as a result of domestic violence between 2010 and 2017. Overall, the murdered women had two kids each, but there were also mothers who had three to four children. Through hotline reporting, every year, thousands of cases of domestic violence are recorded in Armenia. There are children behind these figures who frequently become witnesses to, or direct victims of, family beatings and torture.



During Lusine G.'s 15 years of marriage, she was subjected to violence from her husband ArsenKhechyan, even during her pregnancy, Khechyan beat Lusineh. "My children and I received regular beatings. My children would not go to school for months, waiting for the bruises to disappear," Lusine told her attorney. After one of their arguments, Lusine's husband tied up his 16-year-old eldest daughter, M., with a metal chain in the barn, and he used tape to tie Lusine too so that she was not able to go help her daughter. In Court, Lusine's husband said that this was the way he used to discipline his daughter. As for M., the daughter, she said to her attorney about her father, "He would set us up against our mother and we very frequently testified against our mom at the police station. If we did not, our father would put our fingers on the stove and burn them."

Once, when Lusine, after a regular beating, found herself in the hospital, Khechyan had hit their daughter with a coffee pot just because the girl forgot to bring herbs for dinner.

Over many years, Hasmik K. was subjected to violence from her husband. Hasmik said, "His curses were a blessing compared to the humiliation he subjected me to. He would pursue his pleasures,

return home at midnight, wake up our children from their sleep, force my son to spit and punch my face with his fist, and say that he would take our son to a better mother. If the child did not do as he was told, he would have been beaten. My child would wake up in the morning and say, 'Mom, I do not want dad to do such things and force me to hurt you.' Only after a long struggle does Hasmik now have her two children living with her, but prior to uniting with their mother, these children experienced a period of unspeakable psychological anguish.

Three years ago, Lusine D. was killed by her husband; for years, there was no lack of violence in this family, too. Lusine's husband, Arsen A., had evicted Lusine, with her baby, from their home and into the winter cold, allegedly as a form of punishment. Their fifteen-year-old daughter was witness to Lusine's murder: The girl saw, through a glass door, how her father punched her mother and then stabbed her with a knife. Her brother, A., who was four or five years old at the time of his mother's murder did not see how his father was stabbing his mom: His sister, S., managed to cover his eyes with her hands at the time of the murder. He did not see how his bleeding mother was taken to the living room, but he understood from the conversations he heard the adults having that, "Dad has stabbed mom" and later, told his grandparents that "When I grow up, I will kill my father."

Twenty-eight-year-old Liana M. was killed by her husband. In 2014, in Gyumri, their then five-year-old son, A., witnessed this case. This toddler saw his father stab his mother with a knife sixteen times. The child told his uncle about it, "I saw every-

« "Every day I work with children. In families where there is violence, the child is subjected to violence too, if not physical or sexual, then, as a minimum, psychological. We work with such children, we know what trauma they experience. Many of them, unfortunately, become perpetrators themselves in the future." »

*Nelli Duryan, Police Colonel, Head of Armenia's Police Department for Defense of the Rights of Minors and Fight against Domestic Violence*

thing, I saw how dad stabbed my mom to death, and he stabbed and stabbed her." The child had periodically seen his father was beating his mother. Seeing his mother suffer, each time his drunk father would raise his hand against his mother, A. would ask his dad, "Dad, when are you going to Yerevan so that Mom and I are left alone to live in peace?"

Naira S. recounted how she was periodically subjected to psychological and physical pressures by her husband Ara K. They have four children, the youngest being a three-year-old son. He is now liv-

ing with his mother. Their three daughters, the eldest being fifteen years old, are in their father's custody. In Court, Naira said that the girls were influenced by their father and his parents, and to please their father, they periodically mocked and ridiculed Naira. During a quarrel on January 4th, 2017, when Naira wanted to take her son, who was not yet three, and leave the house, her daughters blocked her and her husband started to hit her. "With me in this position, he took advantage and kicked me in the face, and then told the children, 'Good blow! Didn't I deal a good blow? Children, applaud.' And before that, when I was crying, he told the children, 'Kids, what do you think? Shouldn't we call the madhouse for them to come and take away mom?' I was always humiliated in the presence of my children; they would say that my profession was not a profession, that I was not a psychologist, but a psycho."

In 2014, in an Armavir village cemetery, Artur S. used a stone to deal numerous blows to different parts of his wife Araksya M.'s body and head, and afterwards cut her neck with a blade; His wife did not regain consciousness and died in hospital. After killing his wife, Artur attempted suicide at the cemetery by cutting himself with the blade, but the doctors at the hospital saved his life. They had four young children, of whom the then ten-year-old A. and his thirteen-year-old sister, M., did not want to go to school for a long time after their mother's death, being ashamed and apprehensive of what their classmates would say about 'Their father has killed their mother.' Their paternal grandmother said that she would not tell her grandchildren that their father had killed their mother, but later, on the day of the funeral, seeing her mother's corpse with a disfigured face, the girl said, 'Mom, whoever did this to you, will be punished.' At that point, their

maternal grandmother told her grandchildren, 'The murderer is your father; your mother was killed by your father, and never ever forgive him.'

Narine D. was killed by her husband with 21 knife stabbings in the presence of their two teenage girls. Narine's daughters had seen how their father beat their mother, hitting her with a flower pot. Their grandmother recounted that after their mother's death, the girls experienced profound mental trauma for a long period, and they became withdrawn and easily irritable.

## Behind Closed Doors

## Should beating be used to rear a child?

According to Armenia Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16, seven of the ten children in the 1-14 age group were subjected to a psychological or physical punishment during 30 days preceding the survey. More than two thirds of the children (65%) were subjected to psychological aggression, and 38% to some kind of physical punishment. Violence was used against younger age children more rarely than against 3 to 14-year-old ones. Nevertheless, almost half of one and two-year-old children were subjected to some violent method of upbringing.

The baseline assessment of the situation regarding the protection of children conducted by World Vision Armenia in 2015 demonstrated that 74.7% of parents used physical or psychological violence against their children as a form of punishment during the period of one month immediately preceding the survey. 39.7% used physical violence. 67.4% of the same parents believe that physical violence is not an effective child-rearing method, and only 8% believe that physical punishment is an effective method of upbringing. The research was carried out among approximately 10,000 parents. Another survey conducted back in 2010 recorded the same results.



## The number of child sexual abuse cases is on the rise in Armenia

This is attested by the results of the 2015-2016 Research on Crimes against Sexual Immunity and Sexual Freedom and Peculiarities of the Proceedings Thereof. According to Davit Tumasyan, Head of Legal Support and Statistical Division of Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia, in 2015, 76 minors in the 4-17 age group were sexually abused, and in 2016, 39 more such cases were recorded. "In 2016, 115 children in the 5-17 age group were subjected to sexual violence; 53 of them were schoolchildren. Thus, 14 to 16-year-old minors belong to the most vulnerable group in terms of sexual harassment and abuse," he said, noting that children are mostly forced to perform sexual acts by their relatives, educators or acquaintances. The cases when teenagers themselves commit violence against other children are not few either.

## Expert Opinion

## What is envisioned by the draft law on domestic violence in terms of child protection?

Commenting on the draft law from the perspective of child protection, Aida Muradyan, Project Manager of World Vision Armenia Child Protection Program, noted the importance of the fact that the draft law views a child as a separate entity of legal relations, which was absent in the previous version of the draft.

"The child was rather presented as a person under the care of the victim, primarily the mother. The draft provided a general formulation of family members and the child was not noted as a separate category. Fortunately, the recently circulated draft has undergone a change, thanks also to the opinion presented by us, and currently it clearly states, with an open listing, who is specifically meant when a reference to a family member is made and the child as a subject of law is included and specifically mentioned in the list of family members," noted A. Muradyan.

Speaking about the concern that the draft law's opponents have that the law will provide an opportunity to separate children from their families, our interlocutor stressed that those people who say that this law "will deprive us of our chil-

dren" should point out the relevant article in this draft law. In other words, this law was never intended to separate children from their families, and the concern voiced around this issue was simply absurdity.

"The decision to deprive or limit parental rights belongs exclusively in the realm of judicial acts

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Armenia joined in 1992, the state undertakes "to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation (...) while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."

and the court. Besides, today the state is carrying out a major reform guided by the slogan "The child must live in the family," and is trying to reunite children in the custody of orphanages and other institutions with their biological families. That is to say, had the state included such a

toolkit in the law, it would contradict itself, which is, fortunately, not the case."

The expert reminds us that according to Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the main responsibilities of the state is to protect children from violence and abuse. However, the state has not yet fully defined evaluation standards for the phenomenon of violence; missing is the information on forms of violent manifestations and its prevalence; the mechanisms of coordinated and mutually agreed response of competent authorities are not operational yet. Missing are also rehabilitation services for children subjected to violence and interventions targeting to prevent violence. An attitude of intolerance of the noted phenomenon on the part of society is also not formed yet. For these very reasons, in Aida Muradyan's words, the development and circulation of the draft law is an important step not only from the perspective of an effective struggle against domestic violence, but also in terms of protection of children from violence.

**World Vision**  
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