

Norms of the Council of Europe in the Postsoviet Space: National Minorities in the Republic of Armenia and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

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The present paper includes activities of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), which is Europe's most comprehensive treaty protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in the territory of South Caucasus focusing on The Republic of Armenia. The paper the instruments and mechanisms of protection of national minorities in the republic. It aims to analyze FCNM monitoring cycles, focusing on recommendations by Council of Europe and Reports by the government of the Republic of Armenia as well as Opinions by Advisory Committee of FCNM, considering the influence of Constitutional amendments of 2015 and the "Velvet Revolution" of 2018 in the Republic of Armenia if they are. The paper helps to understand the causes of problems in fulfillment of obligations undertook by the Republic of Armenia in the sphere of national minority protection.

Keywords: Republic of Armenia, National Minority, FCNM, Monitoring Cycle, State report, Advisory Committee, Opinion, Resolution

1. Introduction

The historical, geographical, national, and religious characteristics of Armenia have played a significant role in shaping the region's demographic composition. The ever-changing status and borders of Armenia over the centuries, influenced by numerous wars and conflicts, have led to shifts in the ethnic makeup of the area. While modern national and ethnic minorities have coexisted with Armenians for centuries, the transformation of this ethnic mosaic has been driven by changes in the balance of power in Transcaucasia and the broader Caucasus region over the past two hundred years. The Russian Empire's increasing presence in the nineteenth century, Armenia's incorporation into the USSR in 1920, its subsequent withdrawal from the USSR in 1991, and the Karabakh conflict have all left a lasting impact on the region's demographic composition. These events set the stage for the emergence of relatively new ethnic minorities alongside traditional domestic ones, while some, like the Azerbaijanis, disappeared. Since the early years of Armenia's independence, the country has taken steps to improve the conditions for national minorities and eliminate discrimination. Armenia has ratified a series of international conventions and treaties related to the protection of minority rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified

in 1993), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified in 1993), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ratified in 2001), and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ratified on 17 February 1998). Despite these efforts, the number of national minority representatives in Armenia has steadily decreased since the early years of independence.

National minorities in Armenia can be broadly categorized into two groups. The first group comprises Yezidi and Kurdish minorities, representing non-Christian minority populations. Strict laws and customs within these groups discourage conversion and intermarriage, contributing to their separation from the broader society. The second group, consisting mainly of Christian minorities, has a higher rate of integration due to common religious affiliations and intermarriage with the majority population.

This research aims to understand the situation of national minorities in Armenia and analyze how Armenia's policies affect their well-being. The implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) plays a pivotal role in Armenia's approach to national minorities. Economic challenges sometimes hinder Armenia's ability to fulfill its FCNM obligations, leading to a decrease in the number of minorities in the country. The small number of national minorities, combined with economic constraints, results in their diminishing significance in Armenian domestic policy. This study relies on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include legal documents, international treaties, state reports to the Advisory Committee of the FCNM, and interviews with representatives of national minorities. Secondary sources encompass books, scientific articles, reports, and data-based studies. Major primary sources regarding the history of national minorities in Armenia are housed in state archives, which were not accessible due to geographical limitations.

2. Current minority institutions and their legal regulation in Armenia

The legal status and characteristics of national minorities in the Republic of Armenia are determined by a range of domestic and international laws. These legal norms emphasize the principle of non-discrimination on racial and national grounds. International instruments play a significant role in safeguarding the rights of national minorities in Armenia.¹

The FCNM holds a special place in international mechanisms for protecting these rights. Armenia ratified this convention on February 17, 1998. Armenia submits regular reports on the protection of national minorities to the Council of Europe as required by the convention. An Advisory Committee delegation visits Armenia to gather information, which informs the committee's opinion on Armenia's adherence to the FCNM.² The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, effective from May 1, 2002, recognizes Assyrian, Yezidi, Greek, Russian, and Kurdish as minority languages within Armenia.³

¹ Extraordinary public report of the RA Human Rights Defender on the protection of the rights of national minorities. <https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/9711eea3661a09face5102809637e692.pdf> (15 November 2022).

² The fifth and last visit of the committee took place from February 22 to February 25, 2022. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/-/armenia-visit-of-the-advisory-committee-on-the-framework-convention-for-the-protection-of-national-minoriti-1> (15 November 2022).

³ Decision of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on the participation of the European Charter for regional or Minority Languages (Adclosed Declaration). <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=15653> (15 November 2022).

Armenia ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on June 23, 1993, which established a Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.⁴ In accordance with Article 9, States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for consideration by the Committee a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures they have adopted to implement the provisions of this Convention.⁵

Additionally, Armenia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on June 23, 1993. This covenant, while not exclusively focused on national minorities, contains aspects related to their rights.⁶ By virtue of the aforementioned international agreements, RA started to initiate a number of legislative changes.⁷ According to Article 21 of the Law of the RA „On Legal Acts”, laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Armenia must comply with the universal norms and principles of international law.⁸

In other words, according to the constitutional provision, the international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia are an integral part of the legal system of the RA and are superior to domestic laws. Thus, the principle of non-discrimination is also expressed in Articles 28 and 29 of the Constitution.⁹ Article 56 of the Constitution of the RA declares that everyone has the right to preserve their national and ethnic identity. Persons belonging to national minorities have the right to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language and culture. Articles 26-29 of the Constitution of the RA, as well as the relevant laws, guarantee human and citizen's rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, beliefs, peaceful assembly and association, and free expression. Article 77 declares that the use of basic rights and freedom for the purpose of violent overthrow of the constitutional order, incitement of national, racial or religious hatred or propaganda of violence or war shall be prohibited.

Several institutions in Armenia are dedicated to national minorities. The Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs Division within the RA Government Staff coordinates policies related to ethnic minorities and religious affairs. It provides expertise on draft legal acts and issues associated with its areas of activity. Armenia allocates funding to national minorities from the state budget. This amount has increased from 10 million drams to 20 million drams annually since 2012. These funds are distributed among non-governmental organizations representing national minorities.¹⁰

⁴ Seventh-Eleventh (joint) Periodic National Report of the Republic of Armenia on Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (21 December 1965). https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kron/CERD/7-11TH.pdf (18 November 2022).

⁵ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965, UNTS 660:195

⁶ Extraordinary public report of the RA Human Rights Defender on the protection of the rights of national minorities. <https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/9711eea3661a09face5102809637e692.pdf> (15 November 2022).

⁷ In case of conflict between the norms of international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia and those of laws, the norms of international treaties shall apply. Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Art. 5, part 3.

⁸ Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Legal Acts”. <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=117040> (6 November 2022)

⁹ Everyone shall be equal before the law and Discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited.» It has to be mentioned, that the second part of this Constitutional norm implies the right to replace the military service of a citizen with another service if it contradicts his religious tradition, practice and beliefs.

¹⁰ The Republic of Armenia Government Staff Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs Division. <https://www.gov.am/en/religion/> (30 November 2022).

3. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Republic of Armenia

The FCNM is a groundbreaking legal instrument dedicated to safeguarding the rights of individuals belonging to national minorities. It distinguishes itself by allowing for interpretation based on the unique characteristics of participating countries, giving it a „framework” nature. The convention comprises optional norms and principles that countries must implement through their internal legislation and policies. Notable exceptions to this framework approach can be found in Article 3, which ensures the right of individuals belonging to national minorities to choose their classification, and Article 13, which guarantees the right of national minorities to establish and manage their own schools.¹¹¹²

The effectiveness and efficiency of the FCNM is underscored by the significant number of participating countries. As of March 2022, the FCNM had 39 participating countries. However, it’s important to note that Russia’s membership in the Council of Europe was suspended, and consequently, it is no longer considered a participating country in the FCNM.¹³ Today it is valid for 38 CE member states and since 2004 it has been applied in accordance with the UN MIK-Council of Europe Monitoring Agreement in Kosovo.¹⁴ According to the requirement of the convention, since 2001, Armenia regularly submits the report of the RA on protection of national minorities to the Council of Europe. To date, there are 5 cycles of cooperation between the Advisory Committee and the Government of the RA.¹⁵ According to the requirement of the convention, since 2001, Armenia regularly submits the report of the RA on protection of national minorities to the Council of Europe. To date, there are 5 cycles of cooperation between the Advisory Committee and the Government of the RA.¹⁶

3.1. First State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia on 1 of November 1999

Armenia’s obligations under FCNM stipulated that the country should submit its first state report by November 1, 1999, within one year of the Convention’s entry into force. However, due to certain reasons, the report was submitted with a delay. In this report, Armenia initiates by provid-

¹¹ S. Marshal & F. Palermo, *Commentary of Article 3, The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, a commentary*, in R. Hofmann, T. H. Malloy & D. L. Rein (Eds.), *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: a commentary*, Brill Nijhoff, Boston, 2018, pp. 92-111.

¹² D. Rein, *Commentary of Article 13, The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: a commentary*, in R. Hofmann, T. Malloy & D. L. Rein (Eds.), *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: a commentary*, Brill Nijhoff, Boston, 2018, pp. 246–253.

¹³ On 16 March 2022, the Committee of Ministers adopted a decision by which the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe, after 26 years of membership. The decision was made in the context of the procedure launched under Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. As a result, the Russian Federation will no longer participate in the work of the CCPE or any of its subordinate bodies and working groups. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ccpe/-/the-russian-federation-is-excluded-from-the-council-of-europe> (15 December 2022).

¹⁴ R. Hofmann, T. H. Malloy & D. L. Rein (Eds.), *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: a commentary*, Brill Nijhoff, Boston, 2018, p.12.

¹⁵ Specific monitoring in Armenia of the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/armenia> (15 December 2022).

¹⁶ Specific monitoring in Armenia of the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/armenia> (15 December 2022).

ing a historical context and detailing the reasons for signing the FCNM. According to the report, Armenia had already embarked on extensive legal reforms following the declaration of the Third Republic. However, upon joining the Council of Europe, it was recognized that further significant reforms were needed. The report likely highlights the country's commitment to aligning its policies and practices with international standards for the protection of national minorities.¹⁷

The report provides an extensive list of local and international legal instruments that protect the rights of national minorities in Armenia, which include the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, various international covenants and conventions, all contributing to the safeguarding of minority rights.¹⁸

The report highlights an important gap in Armenia's legislation, which is the absence of a dedicated „Law on National Minorities.” While efforts have been initiated to draft such a law involving experts in ethnographic studies, the law is still pending. Additionally, the report recognizes the significant role of the Human Rights Commission under the President of the Republic of Armenia, which plays a key role in addressing and rectifying violations of human rights, including those of national minorities.¹⁹

The absence of a specific „Law on National Minorities” is recognized as a legislative gap in Armenia. However, work has commenced on drafting this law within the National Assembly and the President's Office of the Republic of Armenia, involving leading experts in the field of Armenian ethnography. Additionally, the Human Rights Commission under the President of the Republic of Armenia serves as an essential institution for safeguarding the rights of national minorities. This commission takes action to rectify rights violations, prevent human rights abuses, and plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall human rights situation in the country.²⁰

The report presents a noteworthy observation, highlighting the shortcomings within Armenian legislation regarding national minorities. Specifically, the report emphasizes the challenges and ambiguities surrounding the definition of the term „National minority,” even though this term is used in the Constitution and various other legal frameworks. Article 3 of the Framework Convention, a pivotal component of the report, plays a significant role in defining the primary recipients of the law and the methods employed to protect the rights of individuals belonging to national minorities.²¹

In January 2000, the Republic of Armenia had 14 registered religious organizations. Out of these, 9 were Christian, which is a notable figure considering the strong historical presence of the Armenian

¹⁷ As at the time of submitting the report, the last census in the Republic of Armenia was conducted in 1989, according to practice, the next census should be conducted in 1999. But according to the Law on Population Census, adopted by the RA National Assembly in 1999, a new population census was planned for 2001. The report was prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on the basis of information provided by the relevant ministries and departments, taking into account the comments and suggestions made not only by the relevant departments, but also by non-governmental organizations of the national minorities of the Republic of Armenia.

¹⁸ The Agreement on the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States, signed between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus on December 8, 1991 in Minsk, formally confirming the collapse of the USSR, stipulated that the parties must protect the national minorities living on their territory in order to promote the expression, preservation and development their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious identity. The heads of state of the CIS signed the Convention “On the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities”, in 1994 in Moscow.

¹⁹ Commission of human rights was established under the President of the Republic of Armenia in 1998.

²⁰ According to the Article 2 of the “Law on Language” of the Republic of Armenia “In the communities of national minorities of the Republic of Armenia, general education and study may be organized in their native language according to state school programs with the obligatory study of the Armenian language.”

²¹ R. Hofmann, T. H. Malloy & D. L. Rein (Eds.), *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: a commentary*, Brill Nijhoff, Boston, 2018, p. 93.

Apostolic Church. In the early years of Armenia's independence, besides religious organizations, various cultural organizations established by national minorities also emerged. Several national minorities had ethnographic ensembles, with the Ukrainian, Russian, and Greek ensembles being among the most renowned and active.²²

3.2. First Advisory Committee visit to the Republic of Armenia and Opinion

Following the receipt of Armenia's State Report on June 11, 2001, the Advisory Committee embarked on the process of evaluating the report. In this context, the Advisory Committee delegation visited Armenia from December 10 to 14, 2001. Afterward, at its 14th meeting on May 16, 2002, the Advisory Committee issued its decision regarding Armenia.

In its assessment, the Advisory Committee expressed appreciation for Armenia's efforts and commitment to fulfill the obligations outlined in the Framework Convention. It also highlighted the importance of maintaining intercultural harmony. However, the Advisory Committee identified various shortcomings and omissions in areas such as education, the use of national minority languages in public contexts, and access to the media within Armenia.²³

The Advisory Committee recognized Armenia's efforts in protecting the rights of national minorities but identified shortcomings, including insufficient airtime for national minority languages in media, educational issues, and limited support for cultural organizations. The absence of a dedicated law on National Minorities was a concern. The Committee stressed the importance of continuing efforts despite economic challenges, as issues could grow more complex over time. Additionally, uncertainties surrounding the national identity of Kurds and Yezidis were noted. The 2001 Census allowed self-identification as Yezidis or Kurds, a positive development.

In the state report, Armenia recognized 11 officially registered national minorities and acknowledged the existence of other ethnic groups. However, these additional groups were not classified as national minorities due to their preference not to be labeled as such and their reluctance to establish public organizations. The Committee recommended the continuous consideration of including these groups under the FCNM. The opinion stressed the importance of conducting an effective population census in the future.

3.3. Government comments and Resolution by Committee of Ministers

On October 14, 2002, the Republic of Armenia responded to the Fourth Opinion by the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee regarding FCNM. The Armenian authorities expressed their appreciation for the Advisory Committee's opinion and conveyed their commitment to implementing improvements to fulfill the obligations outlined in the FCNM. They acknowledged the valuable and practical proposals put forth by the Committee. Simultaneously, the Armenian authorities emphasized that some of the identified shortcomings were a direct result of the challenges associated with the country's serious socioeconomic and demographic situation, as well as the structural

²² Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Catholic Church, Russian Orthodox Church, Yezides religious community, Jewish community, Pagan Community, "Bahai" community, Mormons, Baptists, Evangelists, Christians of evangelical faith, Kharizmats, 7th day Adventists, New Apostolic Church.

²³ First Opinion on Implementation of the FCNM by Armenia, 16 May 2002, p. 3.

changes inherent in a newly independent, developing state in transition.²⁴

The Armenian government has committed to adopting a special law on national minorities, with a draft law already submitted for consideration. This law will distinguish between general rights, ensuring equal treatment with all citizens, and ethnic rights, providing comprehensive guarantees for customs, traditions, religious beliefs, and language use. However, the publication of census results may be delayed.²⁵

The Committee of Ministers, in a resolution adopted on 15 January 2003, highlighted several shortcomings in Armenia's implementation of the Framework Convention. These issues included problems in media access, education, the use of minority languages in the public sphere, and participation in public affairs. The resolution stressed the importance of establishing proper legislation and a legal framework for protecting the rights of national minorities. It also emphasized the need to preserve and develop the identity and culture of minority representatives and to provide media access and educational opportunities in their languages.²⁶

3.4. Second State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia on 1 of November 2004

The second State Report, submitted by the Republic of Armenia on November 1, 2004, was prepared by the Department of National Minorities and Religious Issues of the Government of Armenia. Unlike the first report, this report did not contain an analysis of Armenia's socio-economic situation. It indicated that addressing key socio-economic issues in Armenia would provide national minorities in the country with more opportunities to maintain their identity and receive greater material support from the state. The report was based on discussions with ministries, government departments, heads of national minority organizations in Armenia, NGOs, expert surveys, and meetings with community members of national minorities. The report also analyzed the requests and proposals made by national minority representatives in Armenia. In addition to meetings with numerous national minority NGOs, the Department for National Minorities and Religious Issues visited many minority communities in 2004.²⁷

The Second State Report highlighted several developments and gaps. Armenia has made progress in democratization and establishing key state institutions. In 2003, the Ombudsman Law was enacted, with the first Ombudsman taking office in 2004. Constitutional amendments in 2005 solidified the Human Rights Defender's role. In 2004, the Department on National Minorities and Religion Issues was founded. They published „*Freedom of Conscience, Religion and Faith*,” covering Armenian laws on religion, international documents, registered religious organizations, and an overview of religion in Armenia. Another milestone was the „Alternative Service” law, permitting certain minorities with religious objections to military service to opt for „labor service.”²⁸ The

²⁴ Comments of the Government of Armenia on the First Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Armenia 14 October 2002.

²⁵ During September-October 2002, only the parameters of the resident population at the state level were published.

²⁶ Resolution ResCMN(2003)2 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Armenia (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15 January 2003 at the 824th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

²⁷ NGOs and organizations of national minorities, including more than 30 religious organizations, 4 Assyrian communities, 2 Russian sectarian communities. and about twenty Yezidi-Kurdish settlements throughout Armenia.

²⁸ Second State report submitted by Armenia pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1 November 2004.

Second State Report highlighted active efforts by Armenian authorities to support cultural events and ethnic traditions of national minority representatives. Regarding language use, the authorities emphasized cooperation, especially with Yezidi and Kurdish minorities, attributing this to other minorities' preference for teaching and using the Russian language. Furthermore, some national minorities have opportunities to learn and use their languages at Armenian universities.²⁹

3.5. Second Advisory Committee visit to Republic of Armenia and Opinion

The second visit of the Advisory Committee to Armenia occurred from March 28 to 30, 2006, and their opinion was adopted on May 12, 2006. The Advisory Committee acknowledged Armenia's progress and the positive stance of Armenian authorities regarding minority rights. They noted legislative and institutional developments since the First Opinion, including the adoption of a law on Culture, which supports the preservation of national minority cultural identity. Although a separate Law on National Minorities hadn't been enacted during this monitoring cycle, a draft law had been reviewed and discussed, although some representatives of national minorities expressed dissatisfaction with it. The Advisory Committee highlighted general tolerance towards national minorities, emphasizing the crucial role of the Ombudsman institution in Armenia. Education was a significant concern raised by national minorities, but authorities had taken new steps to address their educational needs since the first Opinion.³⁰

Despite notable progress in incorporating national minority languages into the media, their presence remains limited and unsatisfactory. Communication between authorities and national minority representatives can be challenging, even with advisory bodies such as the Coordinating Council for National Minorities in place. In its first opinion, the Advisory Committee recommended that Armenian authorities consider including individuals from other groups, including non-citizens, under the scope of the Framework Convention on an article-by-article basis. The Advisory Committee appreciated Armenia's inclusive approach to incorporating individuals belonging to national minorities without Armenian citizenship into the Convention's scope.³¹

3.6. Government comments and Resolution by Committee of Ministers

Armenia welcomed the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Armenia dated May 12, 2006, and expressed readiness for continued dialogue to address national minority issues within the Framework Convention. They responded to most of the comments and recommendations in the Opinion. Regarding concerns about media representation, Armenia stated that its legislation doesn't restrict national minorities' involvement in the media, but limitations can be due to the choices of

²⁹ There is a department of Kurdish studies at the Institute of Eastern studies of National Academy of Science of the RoA. The department of Oriental studies of Yerevan State University has a special course in the Kurdish language. Hayknet" educational institution offers a course of the Greek language to all who wish, without age limit. By suggestion of the Greek embassy, there are Greek Sunday schools operating in 10 towns, inhabited by Greeks, in the RA. The Greek teachers leave for Greece for training.

³⁰ The teaching of the Yezidi, Kurdish and Assyrian languages at school has been developed in the settlements where a significant number of persons belonging to these national minorities live.

³¹ The amendment of former Article 37 of the Constitution of Armenia (now Article 41 following the reform of the Constitution in 2005), according to which the enjoyment of the constitutional right to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language and culture is granted to "persons belonging to national minorities", and no longer to citizens only.

national minorities themselves.³² In response to paragraph 24 of the Opinion, the authorities noted that some smaller ethnic communities in Armenia are not covered by the Framework Convention.³³

The Armenian authorities clarified that there isn't a traditional Roma community in Armenia. The Armenian-Boshas, often mistaken for Roma, consider themselves integrated and not Roma. They emphasized Armenia's open minority policy and readiness to cooperate with all ethnic communities, whether they participate in the Coordinating Council for National Minorities or not. Regarding the draft law on National Minorities, those who opposed the 2005 version now support the 2006 revision. Concerning paragraph 30, individuals who don't meet the criteria and aren't part of the majority population will be considered „non-Armenian citizens” and will have different rights compared to those representing „ethnic minorities.”³⁴

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Resolution on February 7, 2007. In this Resolution, it was acknowledged that Armenia has developed its legal and institutional framework for protecting national minorities. However, financial difficulties in various areas related to national minority protection hinder the effective implementation of these measures.

The Resolution called for further efforts to promote equal opportunities for individuals belonging to national minorities, with the following specific recommendations: Continue supporting consultation mechanisms with national minorities, taking into account their diversity. Find ways to increase the participation of minorities in the media and remove legal barriers to broadcasting in minority languages on public radio and television. Conduct more systematic monitoring of cases of discrimination based on ethnic origin, involving the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. Ensure that any future law on national minorities is fully consistent with the provisions of the Framework Convention.

3.7. Third State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia on 1 of November 2009

The preparation of the Third Report involved a special working group created by the Government of Armenia, comprising representatives from various state bodies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Police, President's Office, National Assembly, Human Rights Defender's Office, and the Coordinating Council for National and Cultural Organizations of National Minorities, among others. During the Third Report's preparation, numerous meetings and conferences dedicated to national minority rights were organized. Discussions were held with regional governors (Marzpetarans) in Armenia and the Yerevan City Hall on policies related to national minorities and religious organizations, in accordance with the law, as well as the Framework Convention and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Regarding financial assistance from the state budget for national minorities, the Armenian government indicated that the amount of financial aid is adjusted in line with Armenia's socio-economic development. While the economic crisis has prevented an increase in financial assistance since the previous monitoring cycle, the government highlighted its commitment to continuing educational and cultural programs for national minorities despite the

³² About the small number of persons of Roma and Azeri origin who are not currently covered by the protection of the Framework Convention should be allowed to benefit from it if they claim it in the future.

³³ Udies, Abkhazians, Iranians, Abazins, Moldavians, Romanians, Mordvans, Bulgarians, Ingushians, Tatars, Osetians, Lithuanians, Latvians.

³⁴ The existing draft law included definitions of “non-Armenian citizens” and “ethnic minorities”.

challenging economic conditions.³⁵

Migration processes driven by political, economic, and social events have led to significant changes in Armenia's ethnic composition. The Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia „On Citizens of Non-Armenian Nationality and National Minorities” represented the third attempt to create a law on national minorities. According to the Report, the project's discussion remained incomplete due to strong criticism from some national minority representatives.

On June 13, 2008, the President of the Republic of Armenia issued a decree to establish a new advisory body known as the Public Council. This depoliticized entity operates on the principle of voluntary participation, including citizens of Armenia, representatives of non-governmental associations, and diaspora. The Public Council's purpose is to contribute to the development of a democratic system, safeguard fundamental human rights and freedoms, prevent the spread of intolerance in society, promote sustainable development, strengthen civil society, foster trust between state institutions and citizens, and establish a constructive partnership between the public and authorities. It aims to enhance public engagement in governance and facilitate public monitoring efforts.³⁶

3.8. Third Advisory Committee visit to the Republic of Armenia and Opinion

The third delegation visit of the Advisory Committee to the Republic of Armenia occurred from June 21 to 24, 2010, with the resulting Opinion adopted on October 14, 2010. The Opinion commended the constructive approach of the Armenian authorities toward the monitoring process under the Framework Convention, including the timely submission of their State Report. It acknowledged that Armenia, like many other countries, was grappling with the impact of the ongoing economic crisis, which was affecting resource allocation for implementing the Framework Convention.

The economic hardship had repercussions on both Armenian society and national minorities, with many members of the latter emigrating from Armenia in recent years. The Opinion highlighted that there were no significant legislative changes since the last Resolution. Notably, persons belonging to national minorities in Armenia generally did not see a need for a specific law on national minorities, as they found the current sectoral legislative and administrative arrangements satisfactory. Anti-discrimination legislation had not seen significant changes; it was fragmented and did not provide adequate protection against discrimination. However, the Office of the Human Rights Defender continued to enjoy strong public support and received numerous individual complaints.³⁷

In 2011, Armenia was planning a new population census, but questions about nationality, language, and religion were set to be mandatory, limiting choice, which was seen as a violation of the Framework Convention. Additionally, the practice of translating names into Armenian for certain national minorities didn't follow their languages' grammar, which was also inconsistent with the Convention.³⁸

³⁵ Third State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia. https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kron/PDF_3rd_SR_Armenia_en.pdf (2 March 2023).

³⁶ The Public Council of the Republic of Armenia. <https://www.helix.am/portfolio/council/Website/75> (2 March 2023).

³⁷ Third Opinion of Committee on the Republic of Armenia. https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kron/PDF_3rd_OP_Armenia_en.pdf (2 March 2023).

³⁸ According to Article 11 of FCNM: The Parties undertake to recognize that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system.

3.9. Government comments and Resolution by Committee of Ministers

The Armenian government responded to concerns about the population census by stating that they included a „refuses to answer” option, and they had to reduce the number of questions due to financial constraints. The third Resolution on the Framework Convention for National Minorities highlighted positive aspects like constructive monitoring and tolerance but also noted issues with the population census and a lack of proper legislation for national minorities.³⁹

In order to protect the rights and interests of national minorities in Armenia, it is crucial to immediately establish proper data collection procedures for future censuses and other data collection activities that ensure reliable information about national minorities, including age, gender, and geographic distribution, while respecting self-identification and international data collection standards, further consultations with national minorities should be conducted during local government reform planning to guarantee their effective participation in local public affairs, in addition, there is a need to strengthen anti-discrimination legislation, consult with national minorities about the transcription of their names in official documents, and actively support and promote cultural events that aim to preserve and celebrate the rich diversity of minority cultures within the country.

3.10. Fourth State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia on 2 of December 2014

In its Fourth State Report to the Council of Europe in 2014, the Government of Armenia outlined various measures taken at the national level to address the outcomes of the Third monitoring cycle of the Framework Convention. Notably, these efforts included the publication of the Framework Convention in Armenian, the translation of relevant documents into Armenian, the establishment of a centralized electronic database incorporating local and international laws concerning the rights of national minorities, and the organization of conferences with non-governmental organizations representing national minorities. Additionally, the report mentioned the distribution of booklets titled „Some Provisions of Interstate European Documents Regarding the Rights of National Minorities of the Republic of Armenia,” as well as improvements in the educational system, particularly at Yerevan State University, where the Second and Third national reports on the Framework Convention were translated into Armenian and Russian and made available on the Government of Armenia’s website.⁴⁰

In the Fourth State Report, details about the Recommendations made by the Committee of Ministers in their 2012 Resolution were provided. The report highlighted that the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia had presented the population composition of the country based on the 2011 census, including data on urban and rural distribution, migration dynamics from 2002 to 2011, and the distribution of live births and deaths by nationality from 2002 to 2012. The census program in Armenia for 2011 was developed in line with the recommendations for the 2010 housing census. It was noted that respondents were required to answer all questions in the questionnaire except those related to nationality, language, and religion, with special considerations for maintaining the confidentiality of data for small nationality groups.⁴¹

³⁹ Third Resolution on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Armenia.

⁴⁰ Fourth report submitted by Armenia pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2 December 2014, pp. 1-5.

⁴¹ As According to the FCNM, one should not be obliged to reveal his/her nationality.

Armenia's response to the concern regarding anti-Semitic statements in certain media outlets and the lack of adequate response from authorities and the public was included in the report. It stated that the ALM TV channel, where such statements were allegedly made, denied broadcasting anti-Semitic content and claimed they never intended to incite national hostility or division. The TV channel also issued an apology for any offensive statements as perceived by the Jewish Community, noting that the Jewish Community had not filed any written complaints with the National Commission on TV and Radio.⁴² The report also highlighted Article 26 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Television and Radio, which stipulates that television and radio companies in Armenia are required to allocate broadcast time for national minorities. The law specifies that this allocated time should not exceed 2 hours per week on television and 1 hour on radio. Armenia has been consistently airing television and radio programs dedicated to the culture, language, and history of national minorities. Additionally, the Public Radio Company broadcasts programs in five different minority languages throughout the day, totaling more than one hour daily. The same article also outlines other obligations for Public Television and Radio, particularly related to ensuring program diversity.⁴³

The issue regarding the non-compliance with Paragraph 11, Article 1 of the general principles of the Framework Convention, specifically concerning the incorrect grammar of the Belarusian, Russian, and Ukrainian languages when translating surnames and patronymics in birth and marriage certificates of individuals from national minorities, was addressed in the Government of Armenia's response. The government explained that in accordance with the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, points 11 and 12 of the Procedure for completing forms of civil status records, information about an individual's nationality is recorded in the civil status records when it is indicated as such in their identification documents. In the case of birth records, a child's nationality is recorded with the written consent of the parents. It's noteworthy, as Hoffman pointed out, that certain languages include the suffix „-ova” for females in their surnames. The Armenian language, being the state language of the Republic of Armenia, doesn't have this suffix. The inclusion or exclusion of such suffixes is directly related to the identity and dignity of individuals belonging to national minorities, and its implementation should align with the norms of the Framework Convention.⁴⁴

In response to the comment highlighting the necessity of ongoing discussions with representatives of national minorities in the planning and execution of local self-government reform programs, as well as their involvement in public affairs, the Government of the Republic of Armenia emphasized the existence and operation of the Coordinating Council for National and Cultural Organizations of National Minorities of the Staff of the President of the Republic of Armenia since 2000. The government detailed the responsibilities of this Coordinating Council, which primarily revolve around matters concerning national minorities, such as supporting and safeguarding their rights, and providing recommendations regarding major programs related to national minorities. However, it should be noted that the Coordinating Council functions as an advisory body and doesn't possess executive authority.⁴⁵

⁴² The presidential candidate of Armenia (Presidential elections 2008) Tigran Karapetyan accused the Jews of direct participation in the Armenian Genocide, the accusation was followed by a harsh reaction from the head of the Jewish community of Armenia, Rima Varuzhanyan. p.15 of this research.

⁴³ Fourth report submitted by Armenia pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2 December 2014, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁴ H. Rainer, *Commentary of Article 11*, in R. Hofmann, T. H. Malloy & D. L. Rein (Eds.), *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: a commentary*, Brill Nijhoff, Boston, 2018, pp. 220–225.

⁴⁵ Fourth report submitted by Armenia pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2 December 2014, pp. 10-13.

3.11. Constitutional Amendments

In 2013, Armenia initiated constitutional reforms, transitioning from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary system to enhance democracy and the rule of law. The Venice Commission highlighted the need for broad societal consensus, but this was lacking. In December 2015, a constitutional referendum saw 825,521 citizens vote „for” the amendments and 421,568 „against,” indicating a significant change in Armenia’s governance structure.⁴⁶

3.12. Fourth Advisory Committee visit to the Republic of Armenia and Opinion

The Advisory Committee visited Armenia in April 2016 and appreciated Armenia’s cooperation in the monitoring process, highlighting the regular state reports and their translations. They emphasized the importance of discussing constitutional reforms, ensuring that the new Constitution continues to protect the rights of national minorities. The AC also called for a review of relevant laws, such as the Electoral Code.⁴⁷

The Advisory Committee expressed concern that Armenia, despite promoting ideas of tolerance and understanding, remains predominantly mono-ethnic. Some national minorities are often viewed as mere additions to Armenia’s ethnic makeup. The AC highlighted the lack of media attention to national minorities and the presence of a „one nation, one religion, one culture” concept in relation to religious minorities, equating them to sects and posing a threat to Armenia’s statehood. They also noted the socio-economic challenges in regions with Yezidi populations, exacerbated by the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict. However, the AC appreciated Armenia’s acceptance of 20,000 people from Syria, particularly those of Armenian and Assyrian origin.⁴⁸

In conclusion, the Advisory Committee (AC) adopted four recommendations for immediate action, emphasizing the need for civil society and national minority organizations’ involvement in discussions related to the draft Law on National Minorities and other relevant legislation to ensure their compliance with international standards. They also called for a more proactive approach to protect the rights of national minorities in line with the Framework Convention, consultation with minority representatives to address their actual needs, and addressing urgent issues regarding Yezidi children’s education, especially girls, and the revision of legislation to align with international human rights standards, particularly criminalizing forced marriage and providing preschool education to all children. Additionally, there were recommendations for slower, ongoing actions, such as consulting with local representatives of national minorities to clarify the implementation of language rights.⁴⁹

In addition, the list of Further Recommendations encompassed several important points. These included the necessity to ensure the proper conduct of future censuses and other data collection programs related to national minorities, fostering positive relations among various national minority groups, creating conducive conditions for dialogue between Yezidi and Kurdish minorities, providing adequate resources for the human rights defender to protect the rights of national minorities, revising criminal legislation to criminalize discrimination of any kind, including cyber-hatred,

⁴⁶ Referendum results given by the Central Commission on December 13, 2015. https://res.elections.am/images/dec/15.99_A.pdf (01 May 2023).

⁴⁷ Fourth Opinion on Implementation of FCNM by RA, 13 February 2017, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Fourth Opinion on Implementation of FCNM by RA, 13 February 2017, 5-6.

⁴⁹ List of Recommendations of Immediate action in Fourth Opinion.

ensuring the accurate presentation of national minority histories in schools, aligning public radio activities with the principles of the Framework Convention regarding national minorities, and involving national minority representatives in consultations on the adoption of a new electoral code to ensure their fair representation in the Parliament.⁵⁰

3.13. Government comments and Resolution by Committee of Ministers

The Republic of Armenia provided observations in response to the Fourth Opinion by the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In one instance, Armenia mentioned that the new Electoral Code had entered into force on June 1, 2016, emphasizing that representatives of national minorities participated in the discussion of the draft code. Armenia suggested amending a section in the opinion to ensure the accuracy of the information, recommending that it should state: „The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure effective implementation of the provisions of the Electoral Code on national minorities.” This was in response to a comment made during the Committee's visit in April 2016, and Armenia believed this correction was necessary.⁵¹

Concerning the use of topographical names in languages of national minorities, Armenia pointed out that the law in Armenia allows recommendations on geographical names to be made by various entities, including state bodies and individuals. The Department for National Minorities conducts consultations in rural areas to inform local representatives of national minorities about their right to make proposals for topographical names and indications in their languages.⁵²

The 7th paragraph discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict's impact on Armenia's national minorities. The Armenian government detailed a four-day conflict escalation with Azerbaijan, highlighting reported brutalities and atrocities. They also emphasized that the conflict, closed borders, and blockade have affected the country's demographics and spurred migration, including among national minorities.⁵³

The Armenian government disagreed with concerns about the reliability of the 2011 census, claiming it was conducted following European standards and that a campaign was launched to encourage participation, but acknowledged local skepticism about the census results.⁵⁴

The Armenian government disagreed with the assertion that the 2011 census results were inaccurate according to national minority representatives, explaining that these numbers didn't meet the expectations of those minorities. They also mentioned that some minority organizations may manipulate data to boost their authority. In response to a comment about the impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on patriotism and isolation exploited by media, the government claimed that these events have made Armenians more open and responsive to all nationalities, but acknowledged isolated cases of xenophobia.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ List of Further Recommendations in Fourth Opinion.

⁵¹ It should be mentioned that the Fourth Visit of the Advisory Committee is not even covered by the Armenian media.

⁵² The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Geographical Indications.

⁵³ Comments of the Government of Armenia on the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Armenia 13 February 2017.

⁵⁴ While working on this thesis, I came across a Facebook post from one of the well-known sociologists of Armenia, in which she speaks unflatteringly about the censuses in Armenia, which is now unfortunately deleted.

⁵⁵ Interview.

The Committee of Ministers issued several recommendations for Armenia, which included immediate actions such as consulting with society and national minority representatives in drafting a law on national minorities, actively protecting national minority rights in line with the Framework Convention, ensuring policies align with the Convention, and consulting with minorities to identify their needs. Special attention was placed on addressing issues faced by Yazidi children, ensuring pre-primary education for all children, reviewing legislation to criminalize coercive marriage, and consulting with local national minority representatives regarding language and topographic indications.⁵⁶

The Further Recommendations encompass the importance of establishing proper procedures for future censuses and data collection, fostering positive relations among various national minority groups, promoting dialogue between minorities, providing necessary resources for the Ombudsman to protect minority rights, revising criminal legislation to address hate acts against minorities (including online), guaranteeing the coverage of cultural aspects of national minorities, and ensuring the effective application of the electoral code concerning minority interests.⁵⁷

3.14. 2018 "Velvet Revolution" in The Republic of Armenia

In 2015, the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia was amended, shifting the country into a parliamentary system. However, despite earlier promises that he wouldn't seek the position, President Serzh Sargsyan was elected Prime Minister on April 17, 2018, leading to widespread public discontent. Opposition Member of Parliament Nikol Pashinyan initiated a non-violent protest, marching from Gyumri to Yerevan, which marked the start of a peaceful revolution. As a result, Serzh Sargsyan resigned as prime minister on April 23, 2018, just five days after taking office. Subsequently, in parliamentary elections held on December 9, 2018, Nikol Pashinyan came to power, with a commitment to democratize the country.⁵⁸

3.15. Fifth State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia on 15 June 2020

In the Fifth State Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia in 2020, much like in the Fourth State Report from 2014 to the Council of Europe, the Government of Armenia detailed various initiatives at the national level aimed at implementing the Framework Convention. Notably, the Ministry of Justice began drafting a law to safeguard the rights of national minorities to preserve their cultural and ethnic identities, including religion, language, and culture. This draft law, along with related legislation concerning legal equality, was developed in consultation with NGOs and state bodies and posted for public discussion on an electronic database website. The report states that this draft is currently being refined through public discussions and active cooperation with relevant stakeholders, in alignment with the recommendations from Council of Europe experts.⁵⁹

The report highlighted that non-governmental organizations regularly host seminars and discussions in various regions regarding the challenges faced by Yazidi students, with a particular emphasis on Yazidi girls. In 2018-2019, a public organization called the „Armavir Development Center,”

⁵⁶ List of Recommendations of Immediate action in Resolution (CM/ResCMN(2018)5) by CoE of 2018.

⁵⁷ List of Further Recommendations in Resolution (CM/ResCMN(2018)5) by CoE of 2018.

⁵⁸ M. Lansky & E. Suthers, *Armenia's Velvet Revolution*, Journal of Democracy, Vol. 30, No. 2, April 2019, 85-99.

⁵⁹ Drafts of laws. <https://www.e-draft.am/en/projects/1801> (28 December 2022).

which received funding from the US and Canadian Embassies in Armenia, executed programs to advance the right to education for Yezidi girls. The objective was to ensure the full realization of the right to education for girls and women. Additionally, between 2015 and 2018, the provincial administrations of the Republic of Armenia provided financial support to national minorities without a kin state. The Division conducted meetings with representatives of national minorities, communities, and non-governmental organizations to address issues concerning their situation, express their concerns, and facilitate the exercise of their rights.⁶⁰

Following constitutional amendments, Armenia transitioned from a semi-presidential system to a parliamentary one. The Council of National Minorities, under the Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister, began functioning on May 3, 2019, according to the Prime Minister's decision. The Draft Law "On National Minorities" introduced some regulations, including the use of minority languages in public and administrative domains in communities where the national minority population comprises at least thirty percent. The report incorporated data from the Statistical Committee, derived from the 2011 census, based on the distribution of national minorities in urban and rural areas. In accordance with a Government decision made on October 10, 2018, a regular census was scheduled to be conducted in Armenia from October 18 to October 27, 2020. Notably, this census would mark the first time in Armenia's history that data was collected using the state register of the population, supplemented by additional characteristics gathered through 25 percent sample surveys.⁶¹

Starting from September 3, 2018, a 35 - 40 minute program titled „Side by Side,” focusing on the cultural life of national minorities, was broadcasted by the Public Television Company every Thursday at 19:35, with a repeat every Friday at 15:25. During the same period, the news service produced over 40 materials and reports covering events related to national minorities. On October 31, 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia hosted a panel discussion titled „Draft Law on National Minorities: Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities.” Additionally, on July 4, 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia organized a discussion of the Fifth Report of Armenia with the participation of representatives from 11 national minorities represented in the Council of National Minorities of Armenia. In 2018, Armenia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In 2019, the construction of the world's largest Yezidi temple in Armenia, named the Malek Taus and Seven Angels, was completed. Furthermore, a database of students representing national minorities was established within the Department of General Education of the Yerevan Municipality's Staff. This initiative aimed to involve these students in national holidays and other events, encouraging their active participation.

3.16. Fifth Advisory Committee visit to the Republic of Armenia and Opinion

The Fifth Advisory Committee (AC) visit to Armenia took place from February 21 to 25, 2022, and the Opinion was adopted on October 5, 2022. The AC commended Armenia's constructive approach to fulfilling its commitments. It expressed satisfaction with the positive feedback from national minorities regarding the country's general atmosphere of tolerance. However, the AC highlighted persistent issues with laws guaranteeing the rights of national minorities, as well as challenges arising from the Karabakh Conflict escalation in 2020 and the COVID-19 situation, impacting human rights and minority rights. Concerns were raised about the situation of Yezidi girls, including early and forced marriages, and difficulties in accessing education. The absence of comprehensive legislation on national minorities and unreliable statistics were noted. The AC's

⁶⁰ Fifth Report submitted by Armenia Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the FCNM received on 15 June 2020, p. 4.

⁶¹ Decision of the Government No 1115-N of 10 October 2018.

Opinion included Recommendations for Immediate and Further Actions. These recommendations called on the authorities to protect the freedom of expression for national minority individuals and representatives according to international human rights standards. They also urged the collection of data on gender-based violence against minority women and children, early and forced marriages, and the development of policies to prevent and combat these issues. Immediate action recommendations also emphasized revising the Draft Law on National Minorities in full compliance with international standards, consulting effectively with all stakeholders. Further recommendations focused on addressing issues like self-identification flexibility among national minorities, collecting socio-economic data, and facilitating the practice of cultural and national traditions.

3.17. Comments by the Government of the Republic of Armenia

In response to the Fifth Opinion by the CoE Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, submitted on February 8, 2023, the Republic of Armenia provided several observations. They clarified that most planned improvements had been implemented despite the challenges posed by the Karabakh Conflict and COVID-19, which impacted the efficiency of their work. Armenia also explained that while bills and relevant acts addressing the rights of national minorities were under consideration in Parliament, their adoption had been delayed due to the mentioned crises. Regarding concerns about kidnappings and early marriages of Yezidi girls, the authorities noted that such cases sometimes invoked Yezidi ethnic traditions but asserted that Armenian law and international conventions upheld gender equality and marriage by mutual consent. Finally, they attributed the decrease in the number of representatives of small communities to security and economic issues arising from the blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey. These observations aimed to provide context and clarification regarding the matters raised in the Fifth Opinion.⁶²

4. Conclusion

My research had a primary objective of assessing Armenia's adherence to the obligations prescribed by the Framework Convention. This study delved into the history, emergence, and subsequent evolution of national minorities in Armenia. It also examined the mechanisms in place to safeguard their rights. The findings support the hypothesis that Armenia, due to financial and economic constraints, struggles to fully meet these obligations, resulting in the challenges associated with their implementation. Despite the significant strides Armenia has made to enhance institutional and legislative frameworks for safeguarding the rights of national minorities, several pressing issues persist. These include the absence of a dedicated law on national minorities, difficulties in the education of children from specific minority groups, preserving cultural attributes, and promoting the use of minority languages. The contextual backdrop of constitutional amendments in 2015 and the "Velvet Revolution" in 2018 is critical in understanding these issues. While Armenia has indeed taken notable steps to protect the rights of national minorities, both institutionally and legislatively, certain problems remain unsolved. Most notably, the absence of a dedicated Law on National Minorities and the challenge of enabling language use by minority groups continue to hinder progress. Issues related to education, particularly early marriages among Yezidi girls, persist as well. The tumultuous events in the region, including the Karabakh conflict in 2020 and the flow of

⁶² Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Arts. 30 and 35.

Russian and Ukrainian nationals into Armenia due to the situation in Ukraine, have heightened the importance of safeguarding the rights of national minorities. As a result, Armenia must intensify its efforts to pass the Law on National Minorities to ensure the proper regulation of this crucial matter.