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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

ACFC/SRV(2020)002

Fifth Report submitted by Armenia

**Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities –
received on 15 June 2020**

FIFTH REPORT BY THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

*Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 2 of the
Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*

Introduction

1. In compliance with point 2 of Article 25 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as “the Framework Convention”), the Republic of Armenia submits its fifth report on implementation of the mentioned Convention (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”).

2. The Report contains information on measures taken in the period extending from 2015 to 2019, aimed at implementation of the provisions of the Convention, pursuant to Rule 21 of Resolution (97) 10 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

3. The Report has been elaborated in the aftermath of drastic changes in the political life of Armenia. In spring 2018, a popular Velvet revolution took place in Armenia. Being a purely internal process, the Velvet Revolution served as a new impetus for reforms in the country, including the promotion and protection of human rights. Protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, preservation of their language and cultural heritage are among the policy priorities of Armenia. The Fifth Report has been prepared by inter-agency working group on the bases of contributions received from the following ministries and other authorities:

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Report co-ordinator)
2. The Office of the Prime Minister
3. The Ministry of Justice
4. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
5. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
6. The Statistical Committee
7. The Commission on Television and Radio
8. Yerevan Municipality
9. The Council of Public Television and Radio Company
10. The Council of National Minorities

4. The Report has been developed in accordance with the format adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe ACFC/III(2013)001, on the measures taken to implement the Resolution adopted by the Committee of Ministers (Section 1) and on the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Convention (Section 2).

Section 1

Measures aimed at implementation of the Resolution **CM/ResCMN(2018)5** adopted by the Committee of Ministers (**1315th** meeting, 2 May 2018)

- **Conduct extensive consultations with civil society and national minority organisations while drafting the Law “*On national minorities*” and other legislation affecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, ensure full compliance of that legislation with international standards;**

and

- **Demonstrate a proactive approach to promote protection of the rights of minorities in accordance with the provisions of the Framework Convention; ensure that the policy related to the exercise of the rights set forth in the Framework Convention is developed in consultation with the representatives of minorities to reflect their real needs;**

5. Based on point 82 of Annex 1 to Decision of the Government of Armenia No 483-N of 4 May 2017 “On approving the 2017-2019 Action Plan arising from the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection” the Ministry of Justice has begun work on drafting a law regulating the exercise of the right to preserve and develop the national and ethnic identity, traditions, religion, language and culture of persons belonging to national minorities. In this context, the Ministry has elaborated a package of draft laws “*On national minorities*”, “*On ensuring legal equality*” and related laws. The package has been discussed with interested state bodies and non-governmental organisations, as well as, for the purpose of ensuring public discussions has been posted on www.e-draft.am unified website for publication of legal acts (from 23 February 2018 to 11 March 2018). The discussions were also held on the draft law with bodies which specialise in these questions, in particular, on 27 June 2018, a round-table discussion was organised by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia¹. Discussions were also held on the initiative of non-governmental organisations. In particular, on 16 April 2019, the Eurasia Partnership Foundation organised a discussion on the draft law “*On national minorities*”². On 13 June 2019, the Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister organised a discussion of the above-mentioned draft law with the members of the Council of National Minorities, as well as heads of other organisations representing national minorities.

6. Based on the recommendations of the CoE expert opinion, the draft has been elaborated and posted again for public discussion on www.e-draft.am (15-30 July 2019). Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that during the public discussions of the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and 2020-2022 Action Plan arising therefrom a number of issues have been raised which highlighted the need for further discussion on the draft. Thus, the Draft is currently in the stage of elaboration through public discussions and active co-operation with interested non-governmental organisations, representatives of national minorities and other interested parties.

¹<http://www.moj.am/article/2058>

²<http://www.moj.am/article/1944>

7. The Second, Third and Fourth National Reports of Armenia on the Framework Convention (the 2nd and the 3rd have been translated into Russian), as well as the Resolution on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Report for 2017 of the Advisory Committee have been posted on the website of the Government of Armenia; the link to it is necessarily available on the websites of marzpetarans (provincial administrations). “To disseminate them, the employees of the Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Office of the Government (currently the Office of the Prime Minister) visited the settlements of national minorities, met with representatives of non-governmental organisations of national minorities, community heads, school principals and, where necessary, provided them — on an electronic media — with copies of the Framework Convention (as well as other international treaties relating to the field) and those of all the related documents.”

- **Double efforts to immediately eliminate the difficulties with access to education faced by Yezidi children, especially girls, continue making efforts to provide pre-school education for all children, review the legislation in line with international human rights standards to criminalise marriages without the consent of the spouses, and the forced marriages through the use of coercion or violence;**

8. Non-governmental organisations have regularly organised seminars and discussions in the marzes (provinces) on the issues of Yezidi pupils, in particular Yezidi girls, who have dropped out of general education.

9. In 2018-2019 “Armavir Development Centre” non-governmental organisation funded by the embassies of the USA and Canada in Armenia, implemented the programmes “Promoting the Right to Education of Yezidi girls/women” and “Protection of the right to education of Yezidi girls and women in Armavir and Aragatsotn marzes through raising the awareness of the population and development of teachers skills”, the aim of which was to promote the full realisation of the right to education of Yezidi girls and women, strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

10. All the representatives of national minorities residing in Armenia that are citizens of the Republic of Armenia, both as individuals and as ethnic communities, are naturally holders of the right of national minorities. The Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Office of the Government has continuously held meetings with representatives of national minorities, communities and non-governmental organisations to discuss issues related to their situation, issues of concern, and the exercise of their rights. The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs of the Republic of Armenia have always engaged national minorities in their programmes, consulted with them when resolving problems relating thereto.

11. During 2015-2018 Marzpetarans upon the motion of the Office of the President of Armenia provided primary financial support to national minorities without a kin state, as well as supported in resolution of national-cultural and other problems put forward by national minorities.

- **Consult with local representatives of national minorities to assess the need for use of topographical signs in minority languages in contacts with administrative bodies, as well as in geographical areas populated by representatives of a large number of national minorities. Conduct an awareness raising campaign encouraging the use of minority languages in communication with local self-government bodies.**

12. As a result of the constitutional amendments, due to transition from semi-presidential system to the parliamentary one, based on the restriction of powers of the President of the Republic of Armenia since April 2018, the Council-as a body under the Staff of the President legally terminated its activities, but, in fact, the process of coordination of the activities of the Co-ordinating Council for National and Cultural Organisations of Ethnic Minorities under the Staff to the President continued to lay upon the Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, where the former Council Co-ordinator also moved to.

13. On 3 May 2019, the Decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia “On establishing a Council of National Minorities and approving the composition of the Council” entered into force. Pursuant to this decision, the Council shall function under the Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister, and the technical maintenance for organising the activities of the Council shall be carried out by the Office of the Prime Minister through a relevant subdivision. The composition of the members of the Council was also approved pursuant to the same decision. The composition of the Council, the procedure for election of its members, its functions and goals have remained unchanged (in keeping with the work style of the Co-ordinating Council for National and Cultural Organisations of Ethnic Minorities under the Staff to the President of Armenia). The rules of procedure of the Council and the method of distribution of the money in the amount of AMD 20 million allocated to the national minorities from the state budget were approved at the first sitting of the Council(17 May 2019).The programmes presented by the national minority organisations and the proposed measures for their financing were approved at the extraordinary sitting of the Council (22 May 2019).

14. In 2006, the Government of Armenia implemented the proposal of the Council of National and Cultural Organisations of National Minorities namely, the Cultural Centre for National Minorities was opened in the centre of the city of Yerevan (Saryan str., 22), which was furnished and technically equipped with the direct involvement of the President of Armenia. At the end of 2017, a part of the space intended for national minorities, namely most of the 14th floor, was given to the Department for Charity Programmes of the Staff of the Government, which created great inconvenience for some activities of national minority organisations. At the same time, it should be noted that the classrooms and the corridor have been renovated over the last year, and the number of various cultural events in the Centre has increased.

15. The problems concerning the inconvenience of the currently functioning Educational and Cultural Centre for National Minorities, the reduction of space used, and the wear and tear of technical equipment were among the issues raised at the first sitting of the Council of National Minorities convened on 17 May 2019. To solve this problem, the members of the Council suggested the option of providing a separate building, which will conventionally be called the House of Nations and will serve all national minorities. In order to proceed with the

suggestion, a letter was drawn up with the signatures of all the members of the Council, addressed to the Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister, to take appropriate steps.

16. The Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Government of Armenia consistently undertakes measures towards awareness-raising about culture and traditions of national minorities among various layers of society. Regular meetings with heads of various agencies of the Republic of Armenia, ministers, as well as press conferences are held. Many media outlets are interested in covering the issues of national minorities and cultural life thereof. “Aravot”, “Azg”, “Yerkir”, “Hetq”, “Lragir”, “Hayots Ashkharh” and other printed and internet newspapers are among these media outlets.

17. The following regulations are set forward in the Draft Law “*On national minorities*”:

- In communities where persons belonging to national minorities comprise at least thirty percent of the population, the language of national minorities may also be used as a language of verbal communication with local self-government bodies. The total number and proportion of persons belonging to national minorities in a given community shall be determined on the basis of the data of the regular census conducted as prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.
- In communities where persons belonging to national minorities comprise at least thirty percent of the total population, names of communities and streets, as well as notes on the posters of state and community institutions, including community administration, school, and kindergarten, shall also be marked in the language of the national minority along with Armenian.

See also points 28-36 of the previous national report and responses to Article 16 in this Report.

- **Ensure that appropriate procedures are applied to collection of data of future censuses, as well as of data obtained by other formats to provide accurate information on the situation of persons belonging to national minorities. Ensure the opportunity to indicate more than one ethnicity in accordance with applicable international standards.**

and

- **Provide with an opportunity to declare about multiple ethnic origins in accordance with applicable internationally standards.**

18. The Statistical Committee has provided the composition of population of the Republic of Armenia based on the findings of the census of 2011, by national origin, according to their distribution in urban and rural areas, which is presented in Annex 3 of this Report. Annexes 1-2 also present the overview of migration flows over the period of 2016-2018 and the distribution of live births and deaths by nationality for the period of 2014-2018.

19. Pursuant to Decision of the Government No 1115-N of 10 October 2018, the regular census in Armenia will be conducted on 18-27 October 2020, and the pilot census - on 3-12 October 2019 in one urban and four rural settlements (Shirak and Kotayk marzes) which includes one percent of the country’s population. At the same time, for the first time in Armenia the census will be conducted by using the data of the state register of population, and the data on additional characteristics will be collected with 25 percent sample surveys.

- **Encourage positive relations between different minority groups; create and promote opportunities for dialogue between the Yezidi and Kurdish minorities.**

20. Representatives of the Yezidi and Kurdish minorities regularly communicate during their national events, as well as during the sittings of the Council of National Minorities.

At the same time, we inform that in August 2018, the president of the newly established NGO “Renaissance of the Udi People of Historic Aghvank” applied to the Staff of the Prime Minister of Armenia with a request to support in organising an introduction event for the NGO and to grant a status of national minority to the Udis residing in Armenia. The application was forwarded to the relevant government agencies, as a result whereof the Ministry of Culture provided financial assistance to the organisation of this event. The event, where representatives of the national minorities of Armenia were also invited and participated in, was held in fall of 2018 in Bagratashen, where certain amounts of Udi population reside.

- **Ensure that the Human Rights Defender has all the necessary resources to perform the new functions and powers vested in him/her within the framework of the Law “On ensuring legal equality” in consultation with the latter.**

21. Regulations related to perform the new functions and powers to the Human Rights Defender are currently being elaborated jointly with the Staff of the Human Rights Defender.

- **Promote the review of the criminal legislation to make the motives of racial and other hatred an aggravating circumstance for all crimes, adopt legislative provisions criminalising the act of distributing or otherwise making racist and xenophobic materials available for the public through a computer system, as well as the acts fostering hatred on the Internet, carry out campaigns for raising the awareness of the population of various forms of crimes fostering hatred, as well as create accessible mechanisms to report crimes fostering hatred.**

22. Pursuant to point 6 of part 1 of Article 63 of the Criminal Code of Armenia, crimes committed with ethnic, racial or religious motives, for religious fanaticism, as a revenge for other peoples’ legitimate actions are considered circumstances aggravating the liability and punishment. That is to say, any crime committed on the basis of the motives mentioned above shall already result in a punishment equal to the maximum sanction envisaged for the crime. However, there are crimes where this circumstance is specifically designated as aggravating. These include murder (Article 104 of the Criminal Code), infliction of wilful heavy damage to health (Article 112), infliction of wilful medium-gravity damage to health (Article 113), any action through which a severe pain or physical or mental suffering is intentionally caused to a person (Article 119), wilful destruction or damage of property (Article 185), outrageous treatment of a dead body or a burial place (Article 265).

In addition, the Criminal Code provides for special articles envisaging liability for incitement of national, racial, or religious hatred (Article 226), genocide (Article 393) and for denial, extenuation, upholding or justification of genocide and other crimes against peace and safety of humanity (Article 397.1).

Moreover, the drafts of the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes of Armenia are under elaboration, where the issues related to legal regulations regarding fostering hatred, preaching racial discrimination are under consideration. It is envisaged to adopt these drafts in 2020.

- **Ensure that the culture and history of national minorities are properly represented and taught in all schools, including schools where children from large ethnic minorities attend, and that they reflect all the aspects of cultures of national minorities as an integral part of Armenian society.**

23. Article 9 of the Law “*On fundamentals of cultural legislation*” stipulates that “participation in the cultural life of the society and carrying out cultural activities in Armenia is an indispensable right of each person, irrespective of the national origin, race, sex, language, religion, belief, social origin, property or other status”.

24. The following regulations are set forward in the Draft Law “*On national minorities*”:

- Preschool education and teaching in public schools for children belonging to national minorities may be organized in their mother tongue with compulsory education in Armenian, or additional educational-teaching groups, where they will be taught their mother tongue, culture and history in accordance with school curricula approved by the authorised body of the Government.
- The Government provides funding to development of school programmes, of textbooks and other materials teaching the language and culture of national minorities without a kin state.

- **Ensure the continuous preparation and dissemination of public radio programmes in the languages of national minorities in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Framework Convention. Enable radio and television broadcasting in the languages of minorities, as well as consider the planning of programmes in languages of minorities as a criterion while providing them to private companies of radio frequencies and TV channels.**

25. The following regulations are set forward in the Draft Law “*On national minorities*”:

- According to the legislation of Armenia mass media outlets can be established, television and radio programmes can be broadcast, journals and magazines can be published in the languages of national minorities.
- Programmes presenting the culture of national minorities of Armenia shall be broadcast by public television and public radio.
- The procedure and terms for broadcasting programmes in the languages of national minorities on public television and public radio shall be prescribed by law.

The relations related to the broadcasting of TV and radio programs are regulated by the Law “*On television and radio*.”

26. Broadcasting of television and radio programmes shall be carried out based on a licence. Public Radio Company and Public Television Company continue broadcasting programmes, special reports dedicated to national minorities and news in languages of national minorities.

In particular:

The Public Radio Company prepares programmes dedicated to national minorities of Armenia in their languages. The mentioned programmes are as follows:

- The “First programme” broadcast on AM narrow-band frequency-domain provides the daily radio programmes “The voice of Yerevan” in 4 languages: Yezidi-60 minutes, Kurdish-30 minutes, Assyrian-15 minutes and Greek-15 minutes,
- The “First programme” broadcast on a narrow-band frequency-domain provides daily news feed in Russian for 15 minutes during workdays,
- A 20-minute Russian-language programme entitled “Armenia is our home” which is about national minorities is broadcast once a week.
- The company website contains Yezidi, Kurdish, Assyrian, Greek websites, where recordings of programmes in these languages are also posted. The current news feed with corresponding recordings is available on Russian and Georgian websites.

27. Starting from 3 September 2018, a 35-40-minute programme entitled “Side by Side” about the cultural life of national minorities is broadcast by the Public Television Company. The programme is broadcast every Thursday at 19:35 and repeats every Friday at 15:25. Over the last year, the news service has also provided more than 40 materials and reports on events related to national minorities.

2018

1. National minorities -----25 July 2018
2. Yezidis-----11 January 2018
3. National Assembly, Yezidis -----17 January 2018
4. National Assembly, Genocide of Yezidis-----17 January 2018
5. Protest of Kurds-----2 February 2018
6. UN, protest of Kurds, Afrin-----2 February 2018
7. Tomb of Yezidis----- 6 March 2018
8. New Year of Yezidis -----18 April 2018
9. Spiritual leader of Yezidis-----18 May 2018
10. EC, minorities -----2 July 2018
11. Anniversary of the Yezidi massacres -----1 August 2018
12. Genocide of Yezidis -----3 August 2018
13. Ferik village-school for Yezidis -----6 September 2018
14. National minorities -----21 October 2018
15. Pre-election-Yezidis -----12 November 2018
16. Holiday of Yezidis -----21 December 2018
17. New Year, national minorities -----29 December 2018

2019

1. Conference of Kurdish Women-----15 February 2019
2. Yezidis' Khdr Navi-Shamiram Village-----22 February 2019

3.	Protest of Kurdish community-----	3 March 2019
4.	International Hindi Day-----	26 March 2019
5.	Kurdish community, Ojalan, Protest action-----	2 March 2019
6.	Kurds-Nowruz-----	22 March 2019
7.	Assyrians holiday-----	1 April 2019
8.	Assyrians' New Year-----	1 April 2019
9.	Yezidis in April war-----	3 April 2019
10.	Yezidis' New Year-----	17 April 2019
11.	Combat awards to Yezidis -----	15 May 2019
12.	Combat awards to Yezidis -----	15 May 2019
13.	A Yezidi child, continuation -----	12 June 2019
14.	Genocide of Yezidis -----	2 August 2019
15.	Genocide of Assyrians -----	7 August 2019
16.	Yezidis -----	19 August 2019
17.	Yezidi temple-----	30 September 2019
18.	Yezidi children-----	29 April 2019

- **Ensure effective implementation of articles of the Electoral Code related to national minorities. Guarantee necessary conditions-through the new Law “On national minorities” to ensure the effective representation of persons belonging to national minorities in public affairs.**

28. Pursuant to Article 89 of the Constitution, the representatives of national minorities shall be allocated with seats in the National Assembly under the procedure prescribed by the Electoral Code.

Pursuant to the Draft Law “*On national minorities*” representation of national minorities in the National Assembly is ensured in accordance with the provisions prescribed by the Constitution and Electoral Code (Constitutional Law) of Armenia.

Pursuant to parts 5 and 6 of Article 83 of the Electoral Code adopted on 25 May 2016, the national electoral list may have a second part, wherein representatives of the first 4 national minorities with the largest number of resident population — according to the data of the latest census preceding the elections — may be included, in accordance with part 6 of this Article. A candidate for Deputy, who is a representative of national minority, included in the second part of the national electoral list may also be included in the first part of the national electoral list.

The procedure for granting mandates to representatives of national minorities is described in part 9 of Article 95 of the Code. As a result of the early parliamentary elections held on 9 December 2018, four national minorities (Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds) are represented as Deputies of the seventh convocation of the National Assembly.

The heads of a number of communities in the marzes of Armenia, in particular in Dimitrov, Verin Dvin, Arzni, Alagyaz, Fioletovo, Kanch, Hako, Sorik, Talik, Metsadzor, Shamiram, Arevut, Ddmasar, Otevan are representatives of national minorities.

Section 2

Measures aimed at implementation of the Framework Convention Article-by-article

Article 1

The protection of national minorities and of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights, and as such falls within the scope of international co-operation.

29. The Republic of Armenia actively co-operates with the Council of Europe bodies dealing with minority issues and carrying out monitoring, including the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

30. The draft Law “*On national minorities*” was elaborated by the Ministry of Justice of Armenia. In January 2018, the Draft was submitted to the Council of Europe Directorate General of Democracy for an expert opinion. On 18 April 2018, a corresponding opinion was adopted, according to which the draft Law includes many areas that, in the opinion of the Council of Europe, are important for the protection and promotion of national minorities and their languages, in particular within the context of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

31. On 4 July 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia hosted a discussion of the Fifth Report of Armenia along with the representatives of 11 national minorities represented in the Council of National Minorities of Armenia³.

The Head of the Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a welcoming speech. In her speech, she touched upon the steps that Armenia is taking to ensure protection of the rights of national minorities, which derive from international human rights documents, including those of special significance relating to minorities. Armenia’s expert of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities also took part in the discussion and presented the activities of the Committee aimed at preparation of the reports by states and subsequent implementation thereof. During the meeting, the representative of the Ministry of Justice referred to the issues of drafting the Law “*On national minorities*”, after which the draft report was discussed in detail and the speakers answered the questions raised. The issues raised during the open discussion at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted the need for further discussion of the draft law.

32. On 31 October 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia hosted a panel discussion entitled: “*Draft Law on national minorities: issues, concerns and opportunities*”. Participants discussed the draft law in detail and examined the proposals presented by the national

³<https://www.mfa.am/hy/press-releases/2019/07/04/co/9704>

minorities. In the second part of the meeting Council of Europe expert on national minorities, Prof. Tove Malloy presented the best practices of similar legislation in other countries.

Article 2

The provisions of this Framework Convention shall be applied in good faith, in a spirit of understanding and tolerance and in conformity with the principles of good neighbourliness, friendly relations and co-operation between States.

33. During the reporting period, Armenia implemented extensive measures to bring the human rights protection mechanisms in line with international standards; international human rights treaties were ratified, as well as measures aimed at reforming the legislation of the Republic of Armenia were undertaken.

34. In 2018, Armenia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The Ministry of Justice has initiated the process of ratification thereof in line with the provisions of the Law “On international treaties”. On 26 July 2019, the Minister of Justice requested the official opinion of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe on the impact of ratification of the Convention to Constitutional implications. After the opinion, the Government of Armenia will apply to the Constitutional Court pursuant to part 3 of Article 169 of the Constitution for the purpose of determining the compliance of the obligations enshrined in the international treaty to the Constitution. Then after ensuring the domestic procedures, it will be submitted to the National Assembly for ratification.

35. The Optional Protocol to the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure were signed on 29 September 2009 and on 26 September 2019 respectively and are currently undergoing domestic procedures for ratification.

36. The Government of Armenia envisages to establish a mechanism co-ordinating the activities carried out with international monitoring bodies by making amendments to Decision of the Government No 1483-N of 23 November 2007, which is currently being elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The introduction of the mechanism will enable to make the coordination, translation and dissemination of the activities aimed at implementation of the recommendations given to Armenia more effective.

Article 3

1. *Every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such. No disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercise of the rights which are connected to that choice.*

2. *Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present Framework Convention individually as well as in community with others.*

37. Pursuant to Article 56 of the Constitution, everyone shall have the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity, and persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language and culture. One of the achievements recorded as a result of the constitutional reforms of 2015 is the imperative of regulating the exercise of the above-mentioned rights by law.

38. According to the draft law “*On national minorities*”, the persons belonging to the national minority are the citizens of the Republic of Armenia who are members of a national minority group with a unique national or ethnic identity, historically formed in the Republic of Armenia.

According to Article 4 of the draft, a person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to be treated or not to be treated as such. That choice, as well as the exercise of the rights associated with it, should not lead to adverse consequences for that person. No one can force them to determine or indicate their national and ethnic identity, their belonging to any national minority, just as they cannot be forced to renounce them.

39. According to the Decision of the Government of Armenia “On approving the charter of the Passport System of Armenia and the description of the passport of a citizen of Armenia” the national origin, upon request, may be set in the passport of the citizen by the Passport and Visa Department of the Police or its territorial subdivisions, and in foreign states by diplomatic representations or consular offices of Armenia.

Article 4

1. *The Parties undertake to guarantee to persons belonging to national minorities the right of equality before the law and of equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited.*

2. *The Parties undertake to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority. In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities*

3. *The measures adopted in accordance with paragraph 2 shall not be considered to be an act of discrimination.*

40. Article 29 of the Constitution enshrines that 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.

41. The above-mentioned constitutional guarantee has been reflected in Article 5 of the draft Law “*On national minorities*“ according to which discrimination on the ground of belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited. Persons belonging to national minorities shall have rights and responsibilities on equal basis with the citizens of the Republic of Armenia who are Armenian by origin. The regulations ensuring equality for the realization of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to the national minority are envisaged by the draft Law “*On ensuring legal equality*”.

42. According to the draft Law “*On ensuring legal equality*”, discrimination is an attitude, action, inaction or settlement that is expressed by the distinction of a person's rights and freedoms, based, *inter alia*, on belonging to a national minority. According to the regulations provided by the draft, such treatment may be qualified as discrimination whether it does not pursue a legitimate aim, is not necessary in a democratic society, as well as there is no reasonable proportionality between the legitimate aim pursued and the chosen measures.

43. Pursuant to the draft Law “*On national minorities*”, state and local self-government bodies, within the scope of their authority shall undertake relevant measures aimed at:

- (1) preventing the cases of discrimination on the ground of belonging to a national minority;
- (2) effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of persons discriminated against on the basis of belonging to a national minority;
- (3) ensuring legal equality for persons belonging to national minorities in economic, social, political and cultural life;
- (4) raising public awareness of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as well as eliminating intolerance towards them.

44. Part 5 of Article 1 of the Family Code of Armenia stipulates that discrimination based on 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 social circumstances shall be prohibited when concluding a marriage and in family relations.

45. According to part 1 of Article 5 of the Law “On the Police”, the Police, within its authority reserved thereto by law, shall protect the life and health, as well as rights and freedoms, property, legal interests of any person from criminal and other infringements, regardless of citizenship, race, sex, language, nationality, religion, political or other views, social origin, property or other status, membership of any party or organisation.

Article 5

1. The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

2. Without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation.

46. According to parts 1 and 2 of Article 56 of the Constitution, everyone shall have the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity. Moreover, persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language and culture.

47. In 2019, the construction of the world's largest Yezidi temple in Armenia, the Malek Taus and the Seven Angels was completed. The white granite and marble temple with seven domes was built in the small Yezidi village of Aknalich, 35 kilometres away from the capital Yerevan. The 25-meter-high temple has a large prayer hall, religious school and museum. The seven domes symbolise the seven saints of the Yezidi faith. The consecration ceremony of the temple took place on 29 September 2018, led by the Spiritual Leader of All Yezidis, and the opening ceremony thereof took place on 29 September 2019, with the participation of thousands of Yezidis from around the world.

Monuments to the victims of Yezidi, Assyrian and Jewish Genocide are located in different parts of the Circular Park of Yerevan, where regular tribute ceremonies are held.

48. One of the priorities of the cultural policy is to promote persistently the preservation, dissemination and development of the cultural heritage and culture of national minorities. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia closely cooperates with the associations and non-governmental organisations of national minorities and assists in organisation of concerts, exhibitions and other cultural events. The Ministry regularly holds meetings and consultations with the representatives of national minorities where joint action plans in the field of culture, as well as proposals on improving the relevant legislative framework are discussed.

49. The Festival “Songs and Dances of Different Nations” took place at the Armenian State Philharmonic Hall with participation of a number of dance groups, soloists of different national minorities. Representatives of national minorities also participated in the Festival.

50. As of 2018, the National Library of Armenia collection includes literature in national minority languages: 1.609.144 textbooks, fiction, religious literature, books on art, history, linguistics, philosophy, natural sciences in Russian, 29 textbooks in Yezidi language, 5 textbooks in Assyrian, 672 textbooks in Kurdish, 654 textbooks in Ukrainian, 1042 textbooks in Greek, 5150 textbooks in Georgian, 2251 textbooks in Persian. Two Yezidi, 25 Kurdish and 3 Assyrian readers are registered in the National Library of Armenia.

51. Financial support has been provided for ensuring the continuity of the publication of press and books and the digitisation of newspapers in the national minority languages. Digitisation of the press and literature in the national minority languages is one of the priorities of the National Library of Armenia. All the periodicals published by national minorities are recorded, and the digital versions of five periodicals — Yezdikhana, Ye., 2001 (in Yezidi), Rya taza, Ye. 1930 (in Kurdish), Golos Armenii, Ye. 1991 (in Russian), Magen David. 2002 (in Hebrew, in Armenian), Poka mi zhivi. Póki my żyjemy, Ye., 2003 (in Polish) are inserted in the database “Armenian Press”.

52. In 2015, under the “Support to national minorities” programme, grants were allocated for the organisation of events.

Title of the expenditure programme	Allocated amount (thousand drams)	Name of grantee
Organising Yezidi cultural, educational festive events in the marzes of the Republic of Armenia	300.0	“Sinjar” Yezidi National Union NGO
Organising an exhibition dedicated to the condemnation of the Yezidi genocide	150.0	“Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Cultural Collaborations Centre” NGO
Translation into Armenian of the documentary film “In the Footsteps of the Argonauts”	264.0	“Ilios” Greek Community of Yerevan NGO
Organising aŭ anniversary evening dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Honoured Worker of Art of the Republic of Armenia, composer William Weiner.	1200.0	“Menora” Jewish Cultural Centre NGO
Publication of the book “Patience to you, man” (in Russian) published for the Russian-speaking community in Armenia and abroad.	1086.0	“Book and Publishing Centre” SNCO
Total:	3000.0	

53. In 2016, under the “Support to national minorities” programme, grants were allocated for the following programmes:

Title of the expenditure programme	Allocated amount (thousand drams)	Name of grantee
Support to the organisation of Yezidi cultural, educational events, national holidays traditional events	500.0	Yezidi National Union NGO
Support to the organisation of the Yezidi New Year Festival	200.0	To “Sinjar” Yezidi National Union NGO
Participation of the Greek ensemble “Kharitoni” in the Grape festival “The harvest by the centuries, Stimaga” in the Hellenic Republic.	1300.0	Union of Greek Non-Governmental Organisations NGO
Recording and publishing the “Willy Weiner & Friends” CD of the Honoured Worker of Art of the Republic of Armenia, composer-musician William Weiner.	1000.0	“Menora” Jewish Cultural Centre NGO
Total:	3000.0	

54. In 2017, under the “Support to national minorities” programme, grants were allocated for the following programmes:

Title of the expenditure programme	Allocated amount (thousand drams)	Name of grantee
Organisation of “Khedr Navi” Feast of Yezidis	170.0	Yezidi National Union NGO
Organisation of events dedicated to the traditional Yezidi holidays in Zovuni and Yeghvard (“Charshama Sare Sale” Yezidi New Year, “Chle Havine” feast);	500.0	Yezidi National Union NGO
Organisation of a cultural festival of national minorities aimed at dissemination, preservation and development the culture of national minorities living in Armenia	1500.0	“Nerka” educational and cultural NGO
Implementation of the programme dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the	150.0	“Menora” Jewish

Title of the expenditure programme	Allocated amount (thousand drams)	Name of grantee
publication of the Jewish “Magen Davit” newspaper in Armenia with the view of strengthening the cultural ties between Armenia and Israel, as well as contributing to the dissemination and preservation of the culture of national minorities		Cultural Centre NGO; “Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra” SNCO
Organising events dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the establishment of “Dnipro” ensemble and the publication of the “Dnipro-Slavutich” newspaper	150.0	“Ukraine” Federation of Ukrainians of Armenia NGO; “Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra” SNCO
Total:	2470.0	

55. In 2018, under the “Support to national minorities” programme, grants were allocated for the following programmes:

Title of the expenditure programme	Allocated amount (thousand drams)	Name of grantee
Support to the organisation of Yezidi cultural, educational events, national holidays, traditional events	500.0	Yezidi National Union NGO
Activities of the “Yezdikhana” newspaper covering the life, culture, creative life of Yezidis in Armenia	750.0	Yezidi National Union NGO
Implementation of a complex program of cultural events on the occasion of the “Solidarity Day of the Kurdish People”	900.0	Kurdish National Council of Armenia NGO
Total:	2150.0	

56. During 2015-2018, with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia and under the “Publication of literature of national minorities and other literature” project, 6 books were published, including the novel “Longing” by Amarike Sardar, the novel “Silver Thread” by Aleksandr Poryadochny, the collection of short stories “Rainbow of Mountains” by Mraze Jamal, the book “Sakkilari” by N. Nikolaidi and A. Khurshudyan, the collection of prose works “Pain of Shangal” by Amo Sharoyan and “Poems” by Alikhane Mame.

57. In 2015-2017, literature in the languages of national minorities was also published within the scope of the “Government-Sponsored Literature” programme. The list of the published literature is presented in the tables below:

NN	Author	Title of the book	Amount (thousand drams)
	2015		
1	Amarike Sardar	“Longing” (Kurdish)	750,0
2	Alexander Poryadochny	“Silver Thread” (Armenian)	400,0
Total:			1150,0
	2016		
1	Mraze Jamal	“Rainbow of Mountains”	400,0
2.	N. Nikolaidi and A. Khurshudyan	“Sakkilari”	320.0
Total:			720,0
	2017		
1	“Pain of Shangal” by Amo Sharoyan	“Pain of Shangal”	495,0
2	Alikhane Mame	“Poems”	390,0
Total:			885,0

58. The funds allocated from the state budget during 2015-2019 as grants for the books and newspapers published within the scope of the “Publication of non-state press” state programme and for the cultural events under the “Support to national minorities” programme.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Newspapers	11077,0	11077,0	11077,0	7000,0	10800,0
Books	1150,0	720,0	885,0		
Cultural events	3000,0	3000,0	2470,0	2150,0	4200,0
Total	15227.0	14797.0	14432.0	9150.0	15000.0

59. Activities aimed at recording the elements of intangible cultural heritage of national minorities and including them in the state lists of intangible cultural heritage of Armenia are

being carried out. In 2015-2017, the “Festival of Bread” event was held in Gyumri where national minorities also participated, exhibiting national types of bread and folk costumes. At the same time, these activities contribute to the maintenance and development of links between national minorities, efficient communication in their languages and mutual understanding.

60. By Decision of the Government No 1302-N of 12 September 2019 “On making supplements to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No-241-N of 1 March 2012”, the State List of Armenia’s Cultural Areas has been supplemented with new viable areas of the intangible cultural heritage, including with the information on Verin Dvin village of Ararat marz of Armenia, which is considered to be a settlement with an ethnic cultural description of the Assyrian national minority in Armenia. In 2018-2019, programmes aimed at protection and transfers of the intangible cultural heritage of the Yezidi population were implemented.

61. 15 million Armenian AMD was envisaged for the publication of the press in the languages of national minorities under the “State support for non-state press” budget programme for 2019, which is 18% higher than in 2018.

62. The criteria for state support provided to the press of national minorities have been facilitated through legislation (compared with local media). State funded support is provided to the publication of periodicals of literary, cultural, scientific and other media outlets in the languages of national minorities in Armenia, among which are the following: “Yezdikhana” and “Lalysh” newspapers in the Armenian language for the Yezidi community, “Golos Armenii” and “Novoe Vremya” newspapers for the Russian community, “Iveria” newspaper for the Georgian community, “Poka Mi Zhivi” newspaper (in the Russian and Polish languages) for the Polish community and “Zagros” newspaper in the Kurdish language, “Ilios” newspaper for the Greek community, as well as “Assyriskie Novosti” newspaper in the Russian and Assyrian languages for the Assyrian community.

63. As it has already been mentioned, a number of institutions which are actively involved in fight against racial discrimination, elimination of prejudice leading to discrimination, and promotion of tolerance are operating in Armenia. For example, a number of activities implemented by the above-mentioned Council of National Minorities are presented below:

- Celebrations of Independence days of the national states of the national minority communities.
- Celebrations of national traditional holidays of the national minority communities.
- During 2016-2018, meetings of representatives of the national minorities of Armenia with the leaders of the official delegations from their countries, including the delegations from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Israel and Germany were organised. Visits of foreign representatives of the Assyrians have become regular.
- The delegates of the national minorities of Armenia are included in the composition of delegations for Armenian Culture Days in their respective countries, as well as in cultural programmes.
- Through financial support of the Government, fine arts and decorative applied arts exhibitions and music festivals are traditionally held in Yerevan and marzes with the

participation of all the communities of national minorities. Three music festivals and three exhibitions of national minorities were organised respectively in 2015-2018.

- The Festival “Songs and Dances of Different Nations” is organised annually at Armenian State Philharmonic Hall with the participation of dance groups, leading singers of different national minorities.

- The financial allocation provided to support to the cultural programmes of national minorities from the budget of Armenia is formed according to the applications submitted by the communities. The submission applications and announcement on presentation of grants are available in the official website of the Ministry of Culture.

64. Important projects implemented through the funds of annual grant programmes envisaged by the state budget of Armenia and approved within the Council of National Minorities for 2015-2018 are listed below:

1. Event entitled “Wheel of History” dedicated to the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, Holocaust and 70th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War.
2. Regional events of the “Dnipro” Ukrainian Ensemble dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.
3. Organisation of trainings in 5 Yezidi communities aimed at enhancing the role of education.
4. Publication of the book about the victory of the Great Patriotic War, which contains the memories of the war veterans.
5. Participation of the sport group of Assyrian community in the annual Pan-Assyrian games held in Iran.
6. Participation of the Delegation of the Georgian Community of Armenia to the International Forum of Georgian Communities held in Tbilisi.
7. Events entitled “National Minorities of the Republic of Armenia against Genocides” in Yerevan and Vanadzor.
8. Armenian-Jewish conference dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Jewish community of Armenia.
9. Organisation of concerts by the Federation of Ukrainians of Armenia in Ijevan and Vanadzor dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia.
10. Large-scale project “Through Culture to Tolerance” implemented by “Menora” Jewish Culture Centre.
11. Participation of representatives of the Belarusian Community in Armenia at the Festival of Belarusian Culture held in Minsk.
12. Event dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the “Dnipro” Ukrainian Ensemble and “Dnipro-Slavutich” newspaper.
13. Yezidi two-day educational and cultural gathering in Armavir marz.
14. Acquisition of costumes for the Assyrian national ensemble of the Artagers community.
15. Implementation of the programme entitled “Developed Yezidi Community in the Republic of Armenia”.
16. Joint event of national minorities in the border region dedicated to the 25th anniversary

of the independence of the Republic of Armenia.

17. Events dedicated to the anniversary of establishing organisations representing Russian, Georgian, Polish, Belarusian, Greek communities.

18. Event entitled “Enhancement of the role of education among Yezidis”.

19. Event entitled “New Armenian-Georgian Talks” dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the independence of Armenia and Georgia, with the participation of Armenian and Georgian artists.

20. Event dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Swabian resettlement in the Caucasus by the “‘Teutonia’ German Cultural Centre” organisation.

21. Acquisition of national costume for the Greek Ensemble of Gyumri.

22. Acquisition of national costumes for the Kurdish Community Ensemble, support for the publication of “Zagros” and “Ria Taza” newspapers.

65. During the reporting period, the representatives of national minorities have received the following state awards:

- Yuri Yakovenko (Russian Community) — Movses Khorenatsi Medal, 2017
- Svetlana Namchevadze (Georgian Community) — Medal of Gratitude, 2017
- Mirza Sloyan (Yezidi community) — Anania Shirakatsi Medal, 2017

66. Armenia has taken all historical and architectural, cultural, and religious monuments located within the territory of the Republic under state protection irrespective of their ethnic or religious belonging. Apart from the monuments belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church and historical ones, about 50 Muslim monuments are record-registered and preserved in different marzes of Armenia, most of which are cemeteries.

67. In 2018, Uso Nadoyan (Yezidi) was awarded the Equal Promotion of Universal Rights Award for equal opportunities for young people in the Yezidi community and for his exceptional dedication to enhancing the importance for women's and girls' education.

Article 6

1. The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.

2. The Parties undertake to take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

68. A database of pupils representing national minorities has been created within the Department of General Education of the Staff of Yerevan Municipality in order to involve them in the national holidays or other events and encourage their participation at these events.

69. Educational activities for the representatives of the national minorities of Armenia in kindergartens under the jurisdiction of Yerevan Municipality are organized following the principle of ensuring equal and accessible education for all children. Russian and English are taught as additional educational programs in Yerevan's kindergartens. Children participate in the mentioned programmes with the consent and choice of parents or legal representatives. Taking into consideration the fact that there is a low number of children of national minorities attending kindergartens of different administrative districts of Yerevan, the operation of separate groups is not carried out.

70. The processes of improving the educational data-base and enhancing the professional skills of staff for national minorities have been improved. The textbooks "Speak Assyrian" (the 1st grade), "Write and speak Assyrian" (the 2nd grade), "Alap-Bit" (the 3rd grade), "Kurdish" (the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th grades), "Yezidi" (from the 1st to 4th, 11th, 12th grades) have been ordered for the academic year of 2018-2019. For the purpose of building capacities of national minorities, training courses were organised in general education schools (three teachers of Yezidi language were trained in 2018, and two teachers of Assyrian language in 2017).

71. Since 2017, within the framework of "Enhancing the opportunity for the children of national minorities to receive good quality education", free of charge hobby groups of Yezidi language have been operating in schools No 66, 107, 136 of the Municipality of Yerevan. 47 Yezidi pupils of 1-12 grades are involved in these hobby groups.

72. Article 22 of the Law "On Television and Radio" explicitly prohibits the use of television and radio programmes to incite national, racial and religious hostility or division. Public television and radio regularly broadcast programmes about ethnic communities of Armenia dedicated to their history, education, culture, language and rights. It is worth mentioning that there are no mass media in Armenia that would disseminate negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities.

73. Events dedicated to the anniversaries of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War were organised through the efforts of the Yezidi community.

Every year on 24 April, the national minorities residing in Armenia also visit the Genocide Victims memorial complex (Tsitsernakaberd) dedicated to the commemoration of victims of the Armenian Genocide.

On December 9, 2019 a number of events dedicated to the International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide were held in Yerevan.

People visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial, Holocaust Victims Monument, the Yazidi innocent Victims Memorial and the Monument of the innocent Assyrian victims.

74. The 21st of February, which was declared as International Mother Language Day by UNESCO in 2018, is widely celebrated in Armenia through the regular initiatives of the members of the Armenian National Commission for UNESCO. The Secretariat of the Armenian National Commission for UNESCO organised a celebration dedicated to International Mother Language Day in Armenia, jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of Armenia. Within the scope of this initiative,

representatives of 11 national minorities represented in Armenia were invited to participate in a roundtable discussion on the topic of “Linguistic Rights of National Minorities” to celebrate International Mother Language Day and discuss the problems and challenges that national minorities face while preserving their native languages and using their languages in practice. During the mentioned event, the participants raised their concerns and made proposals to improve the sector. The concerns and proposals were properly recorded by the representatives of the relevant state bodies participating in the meeting, including the representatives of the State Language Inspectorate of the Republic of Armenia and the Institute of Language of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. The representatives of the national minorities were invited to participate in another roundtable discussion to discuss the draft Law “On making amendments to the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On language”.

Article 7

The Parties shall ensure respect for the right of every person belonging to a national minority to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 8

The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations.

75. Article 41 of the Constitution of provides everyone, including representatives of national minorities with the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion guaranteed by the Constitution. This right shall include the freedom to change religion or belief and, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, the freedom to manifest them in preaching, church ceremonies, other rites of worship or in other forms.

76. The Constitution also stipulates the right to replace military service with alternative service, as prescribed by law, if it contradicts religious faith or belief thereof, which is also equally applicable in the case of representatives of national minorities.

77. According to Article 44 of the Constitution, everyone shall have the right to freely participate and organise peaceful, unarmed assemblies. According to Article 6 of the Law “On freedom of assemblies”, everyone (citizens of Armenia, foreign citizens and stateless persons) shall have the right to participate in assemblies. No one shall have the right to force a person to participate in any assembly or hinder his or her participation in any assembly. The mentioned regulation shall also equally extend to persons belonging to national minorities.

78. The right of national minorities to preserve and develop their religion is guaranteed by part 2 of Article 56 of the Constitution. Besides, the national minorities may be involved in religious organisations and carry out their activities, taking into consideration the fact that freedom of activity of religious organisations is guaranteed in Armenia and religious organisations are separated from the State.

79. The constitutional guarantees have been reflected and more thoroughly regulated within the scope of the draft Law “*On national minorities*”, stipulating the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to celebrate national religious holidays and establish organisations.

80. Currently, the draft Law “On making an amendment to the Law of the Republic of Armenia on freedom of conscience and religious organisations and on making amendments to related laws”, aiming to bring the legal regulations into compliance with the current situation, as well as with the constitutional reforms of 2015 in Armenia and ratified international agreements are under the consideration of the Prime Minister’s office.

81. 66 religious organisations have obtained state registration, seven of which belong to national minorities.

The mentioned religious organisations are the following:

1. Religious organisation of the community of the Holy Mother of God of the **Russian** Orthodox Church in Yerevan
2. Religious organisation of the community of the Church of Nativity of the Holy Mother of God of the **Russian** Orthodox Church in Vanadzor
3. “Religious Community of **Russian** Molokans in the city of Tsaghkadzor” religious organisation
4. “ Monastery Complex of the Intercession of the Holy Mother of God of the **Russian** Orthodox Church” religious organisation
5. “Shekhe-Shekhu-Bakrae” national spiritual council” religious organisation of the **Yezidis** of Armenia.
6. “Holy Apostolic Church of East **Assyrian** Catholicosate” Assyrian religious organisation of Armenia
7. Jewish religious community of Armenia

82. Within the framework of implementation of the state policy on culture, the Ministry of Culture, jointly with the Urban Development Committee and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development regularly organises discussions on mid-term expenditure programmes and budget applications received from marzes and communities for renovation and construction of cultural houses and centres. After discussions, cultural houses are regularly renovated or built in various communities, including in the settlements of national minorities.

83. For the purpose of ensuring additional conditions for presenting the ethnic culture of national minorities, construction of the baptistery included in the Complex of the Russian Orthodox Church at 68 Sarkavag, Kanaker-Zeytun Administrative District of Yerevan, the sketch design for reinforcement of the dome of a Turkmen tomb have been considered, and the design and estimate documentation for the Assyrian churches of Verin Dvin and Arzni have been agreed upon.

84. The midterm expenditure program of the state budget for 2018-2020 encompasses the work on the technical design documents for the renovation of the Russian church in the Amrakits community of Lori Marz. In 2015 the technical design documents for the strengthening, repair and restoration of the Turkmen mausoleum of Argavand community were compiled, for which 3,400,000 AMD were allocated from the state budget and in 2017, the technical documents for the improvement (drainage) of the area of the same monument, for which 850,000 AMD were allocated. As a result of studies conducted in 2018, it was envisaged to draft the plan for the protected zone of the Hebrew Cemetery (14th-17th centuries) of Yezegis community of Vayots Dzor Marz.

85. In 2019-2021, it is envisaged to complete the installation of trilingual signboards in the territory of monuments belonging to national minorities.

See also paragraphs 96-99 of the Report.

Article 9

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that the right to freedom of expression of every person belonging to a national minority includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas in the minority language, without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. The Parties shall ensure, within the framework of their legal systems, that persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media.

2. Paragraph 1 shall not prevent Parties from requiring the licensing, without discrimination and based on objective criteria, of sound radio and television broadcasting, or cinema enterprises.

3. The Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities. In the legal framework of sound radio and television broadcasting, they shall ensure, as much as possible, and taking into account the provisions of paragraph 1, that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media.

4. In the framework of their legal systems, the Parties shall take adequate measures in order to facilitate access to the media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and permit cultural pluralism.

86. Law “On making amendments and supplements to the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On television and radio” HO-153-N of 23 March 2018 was adopted as a result of the amendments to the Constitution in 6 December 2015.

87. According to the amendments made to the Law “On television and radio”, sub-point “d” of point 3 of part 2 of Article 26 of the Law prescribed an obligation for the Public Television and Radio Company to provide airtime for broadcasting programmes about the life, culture, including the languages of the national minorities of Armenia.

88. In order for the Public Television and Radio Company to perform the above-mentioned obligation properly, the Television and Radio Commission has been authorized to adopt sub-legislative normative legal acts. According to the decision of the Television and Radio Commission the minimum timeframes for broadcasting the life, culture, including programs about the languages on the national minorities on public television and radio have been specified.

In particular,

On Public Television — at least 30 minutes a week;

On Public Radio — at least 30 minutes a day.

89. According to the decision of the Television and Radio Commission, the procedure for submitting a report on the diversity of information, educational, cultural and entertainment programs by the Public Television and Radio Company has been defined, pursuant to which they should on a quarterly basis submit a report to the Commission.

90. Pursuant to the Law “On television and radio”, the Public Television and Radio Company shall develop and implement programme policies and shall be obliged to deliver his audience such programs where the interests of various regions, national minorities, various layers and social groups are presented.

91. Every day, the Public Radio of Armenia broadcasts in national languages of minorities, in particular in Assyrian - 15 minutes, in Kurdish - 30 minutes, in Yezidi - 30 minutes and in Greek - 15 minutes. On working days, an analytical news programme is broadcast for Russian-speaking national minorities, with a duration of 15 minutes.

92. Analytical, informative and awareness raising programmes concerning citizen’s rights mainly in Armenian or Russian languages are regularly broadcast by public and other television companies upon the initiative or with the participation of representatives of national minorities. Upon the request of TV journalists, the representatives of national minorities speak in their own languages while commenting on the events or festivals of national minorities. Television companies operating in the regions broadcast different programmes periodically addressing issues raised by national minorities.

93. The Ministry of Culture provides financial assistance to the periodic literary, cultural, scientific and other media publications released in the languages of national minorities.

94. Newspapers and magazines published in minority languages during the period under review are listed below:

The table presents the print media published in minority languages in 2015-2019 under “Publication of non-state press” state programme:

Distribution of allocations envisaged by the 2015-2019 “Non-state press publication” programme according to individual publications							
(Press published in the languages of national minorities)							
R/N	Names of public administration bodies of the Republic of Armenia executing the expenditure plan and/or entities acting as legal persons receiving state support	Names of print media	Total Amount (thousand AMD)				
			11 077,0	11 077,0	11 077,0	7 000,0	10 800,0
			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Newspapers							
1.	“Yezidi National Union” NGO	“Yezdikhana”	900,0	900,0	900,0	-	-
2.	“Yezidi National Committee” NGO	“Lalish”	900,0	900,0	900,0	900,0	-
3.	“‘Rya-Taza’ Newspaper Editorial” LLC	“Rya Taza”	900,0	900,0	900,0	900,0	1200,0
4.	“Golos” LLC	“Golos Armenii”	500,0	500,0	500,0	500,0	-
5.	“‘Ukraine’ Federation of Ukrainians of Armenia” NGO	“Dnipro-Slavutich”	2668,0	2668,0	2648,0	900,0	1200,0
6.	“Kurdish National Council of Armenia” NGO	“Zagros”	900,0	900,0	900,0	900,0	1200,0
7.	“Newspaper of Jewish Community of Armenia” NGO	“Magen David”	500,0	500,0	500,0	500,0	1200,0
8.	“‘Iveria’ Georgian Charitable Community” NGO	“Iveria”	500,0	500,0	500,0	500,0	-
9.	“‘NovoyeVremya’ Daily Editorial” LLC	“Novoye Vremya”	500,0	500,0	500,0	500,0	-
10.	“‘Belarus’ Belarusian Community of Yerevan” NGO	“Belarus” (Russian, Belarusian)	500,0	500,0	300,0	300,0	1200,0
11.	“‘Khayadta’ Federation of Assyrian Organisations of Armenia” union of legal persons	“Assyriskie Novosti” (Russian, Assyrian)	800,0	800,0	800,0	800,0	1200,0
12.	“‘Ilios’ Greek Community of Yerevan” NGO	“Ilios” (Russian, Armenian, Greek)	500,0	500,0	500,0	500,0	1200,0

13.	“Biznes Zet-PR’ Advertising Publishing House” LLC	“Argumenti Nedeli v Armenii” (Russian)	500.0	500.0	500.0	-	-
14.	“Voice of Yezidis” Editorial LLC	“Yezdikhana”					1200.0
Magazines							
1.	“‘Polonia’ Union of Poles in Armenia” Charitable NGO	“Poka Mi Zhivi”	529,0	529,0	529,0	500,0	500,0

Article 10

1. *The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing.*

2. *In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.*

3. *The Parties undertake to guarantee the right of every person belonging to a national minority to be informed promptly, in a language which he or she understands, of the reasons for his or her arrest, and of the nature and cause of any accusation against him or her, and to defend himself or herself in this language, if necessary with the free assistance of an interpreter.*

95. As a result of the constitutional reforms of 2015, it was stressed once again, that everyone shall have the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity. Persons belonging to national minorities shall, among others, have the right to preserve and develop their respective languages.

96. Part 1 of Article 15 of the Criminal Procedure Code prescribes that in Armenia criminal proceedings shall be conducted in Armenian. According to Part 2 of the same article, persons participating in criminal proceedings, except for the body conducting the criminal proceedings, have the right to appear in court in their preferred language if they provide the Armenian translation. Part 3 of the same Article stipulates that the participant of the criminal proceedings (except for the body conducting the criminal proceedings), the expert appointed by his initiative, the specialist invited by him or the witness shall provide the services of an interpreter at the expense of state funds by the Court if the person proves that he/she does not have sufficient means to provide a paid translation. Part 4 of the same Article prescribes that the persons participating in the criminal proceedings (except for a witness) present all the needed documents in Armenian or another language with a proper Armenian translation. In case of failure to comply with the mentioned requirement, the body conducting criminal proceedings

shall not consider the procedural documents or shall not permit the acceptance thereof, and in cases provided for by this Code, shall return to the persons having submitted them.

97. Part 1 of Article 3 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Armenia prescribes that on the territory of Armenia regardless the type of crime criminal proceeding shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Code, unless otherwise provided for by the international treaties ratified by Armenia. Consequently, the certified copies of documents to be delivered to the person belonging to a national minority and lacking knowledge of the language of proceedings (Armenian) may, upon the desire of the person, be provided in the respective language as in that case it will be necessary to be guided by the requirements of the Charter. Based on this principle, we find that persons belonging to national minorities with knowledge of the language of proceedings may also demand that the documents to be delivered be provided to them with certified copies in the respective language.

98. Pursuant to Article 16 of the Civil Procedure Code in the Republic of Armenia civil proceedings shall be conducted in Armenian. Pursuant to part 2 of Article 16 persons participating in the case shall submit all procedural documents in Armenian or other language with proper translation into Armenian. In case of failure to comply with the mentioned requirement, the Court shall not consider the procedural documents or shall not permit the acceptance thereof, and in cases provided for by this Code, shall return them to the persons having submitted them. Pursuant to part 3 of Article 16 persons participating in the case shall have the right to appear in court in the language of their preference, as long as they provide interpretation into Armenian. The services of an interpreter shall be provided at the expense of state funds if the relevant person lacks knowledge of Armenian and the person participating in the case proves that he or she does not have sufficient means to afford paid interpretation.

99. Exercise of the mentioned right is also regulated by the Law “On language” and the draft Law “*On national minorities*”. As a result of the supplement made to the Law “On language” on 23 March 2018, the Language Committee ensures protection of the linguistic rights of national minorities.

Article 11

1. *The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronymic) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system.*

2. *The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to display in his or her minority language signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public.*

3. *In areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavour, in the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, agreements with other States, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is a sufficient demand for such indications.*

100. The draft Law “*On national minorities*” envisages that in communities where persons belonging to national minorities comprise at least thirty percent of the total population, the names of communities and streets, as well as the signs of state and community institutions, including those of the community administration, schools and kindergartens, can be written in the language of the national minority along with Armenian.

101. According to point 22 of part 1 of Article 18 of the Law “*On local self-government*” and point 23 of part 1 of Article 12 of the Law “*On local self-government in Yerevan*”, the Council of Elders shall make decisions on the names of the streets, avenues, squares, parks, educational, cultural and other organisations.

102. One of the classrooms of the school in Artashavan community of Aragatsotn Marz has been renamed after hero of the four-day Artsakh⁴ War of April 2016 Kyaram Sloyan, who attended that school.

103. The primary school of the Ferik village of Armavir Marz has been named after its former director, Yezidi writer Rzalie Rashid Ozmanyany.

104. In Fioletovo, Lermontovo and Privolnoye communities of Lori Marz the of names of settlements are written in both Armenian and Russian languages. Topographical panels have been placed in the national minority languages near the entrances to Zovuni, New Gegh, Arzni and Kanakeravan settlements of Kotayk Marz.

⁴In April 2, 2016 Azerbaijan unleashed large-scale offensive operations against Nagorno-Karabakh thus violating Trilateral Agreements of 1994 on ceasefire, and of 1995 on the consolidation of ceasefire regime signed by Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia without time limitation. Three captive soldiers, among them Yezidi serviceman Kyaram Sloyan were beheaded by Azerbaijani armed forces in the style of Daesh, which was subsequently publicized through social networks.

Article 12

- 1. The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority.*
- 2. In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.*
- 3. The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.*

Article 13

- 1. Within the framework of their education systems, the Parties shall recognise that persons belonging to a national minority have the right to set up and to manage their own private educational and training establishments.*
- 2. The exercise of this right shall not entail any financial obligation for the Parties.*

Article 14

- 1. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.*
- 2. In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language.*
- 3. Paragraph 2 of this article shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language.*

105. In addition to curricula, textbooks, and training of pedagogical staff aiming to support the preservation of the languages of national minorities, the state budget of Armenia also provides financial resources to non-governmental organizations of ethnic communities to encourage the publication of their periodicals. The Ministry of Culture supports the publication of 13 print media outlets and 1 magazine in the languages of 11 national minorities.

106. National minorities have intensively carried out book publishing activities over the past five years. In 2015, the novel “Longing” by Kurdish publicist Amarike Sardar was published in Kurdish, the Russian-language novel “Silver Thread” by Russian author Aleksandr Poryadochny was translated into Armenian. In 2016, the collection of short stories “Rainbow of Mountains” (in the Yezidi language) by Mraze Jamal and the book “Sakkilari” by Greek author N. Nikolaidi and A. Khurshudyan were published. In 2017, the collection of prose works “Pain of Shangal” by Yezidi author Amo Sharoyan and the Kurdish-language book “Poems”

by Alikhane Mame were published.

107. Various events are organised in the respective languages in order to facilitate the use of written form of the native languages of the national minorities. In 2017, in order to strengthen the Armenian-Israeli cultural relations, as well as to promote the spread and preservation of the culture of national minorities in Armenia the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra has implemented a program dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the publication of the Jewish “Magen David” newspaper in Armenia and held events dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the “Ukraine’ Federation of Ukrainians of Armenia” NGO, the establishment of “Dnipro” ensemble and the publication of the “Dnipro-Slavutich” newspaper.

108. Besides, the Youth Foundation of Armenia has provided financial support both for education of Yezidi students and implementation of cultural programmes proposed by the youth organisations representing the Yezidi community. Annex 4 shows information on the representatives of national minorities studying in higher educational establishments of the Republic of Armenia, as of 2018.

109. Four representatives of national minorities study in post-graduate education programmes, three of them (from Assyrian, Yezidi and Ukrainian communities) study at Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi, one more representative from Yezidi community studies at National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia.

110. In June of the 2017-2018 academic year, the internship of a group of students of the Yerevan State College of Humanities was organised in Germany. Advanced German has been taught in the Yerevan State College of Humanities for the past three years. The College has officially joined the vocational education programme (DSD) of the German Society for International Cooperation. The Yerevan State College of Humanities is successfully implementing the programme as the first VET institution that has joined this programme. By gaining advanced knowledge of German (Level B1), the students of the College, without additional verification of knowledge, can continue their education in the secondary vocational education sector of Germany, and in certain cases also in the higher education sector. German specialists also teach in the College.

111. In Aragatsotn Marz, in 2016, the “Yezidi language” textbooks for the 1st-12th grades were republished, and in 2015 — the “Kurdish language” textbooks for the 7th, 8th and 9th grades were republished. In Ararat Marz, the schools were provided with the textbooks “The alphabet of Yezidi language”, “Yezidi language” and “Yezidi Literature” for the 5th-11th grades, “Yezidi language” for the 10th-11th grades, with 100 examples each. In Armavir Marz, in cooperation with national institutions of minorities of Armenia, instruction of native language is organised for children belonging to national minorities at general education schools of those communities of the marz where there are communities of national minorities. The Yezidi language is taught in 21 schools, and the Assyrian language in one school of the marz. A total of 1133 children are involved in the courses; all the pupils are provided with textbooks. The Yezidi language is taught in the secondary school of the community for Yezidi children belonging to the national minority residing in Azatan community of Shirak Marz. The teacher has 6 hours workload a week and is paid according to the prescribed rate. Teaching is carried

out with Yezidi textbooks which were updated and republished in 2018 upon the order placed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, in cooperation with “Yezidi Union of Northern Marzes” NGO.

112. Since 1998, the subjects “Assyrian” and “Assyrian Literature” have been included in the Russian language curriculum of Primary School No. 8 after A. Pushkin of Yerevan Municipality. Instruction is carried out through textbooks developed and printed through the efforts of the Assyrian community. The teachers are Assyrians, which also creates favourable conditions for introducing the schoolchildren to Assyrian culture, traditions and other national features. During the lessons, the teachers, as an alternative, also use Assyrian history textbooks and books written by Assyrian authors. Every year the number of schoolchildren involved in the study of the subject is 250-300. Teaching of the subjects to the extent possible is accompanied by the teaching of Assyrian poems and songs, and this makes the lessons more interesting and meaningful. Open lessons, staged plays, exhibitions and other extracurricular events are also organised. Every year, the 7th graders organise a lesson-report on the history of the Assyrian nation, and the 8th graders organise a lesson-report on Assyrian culture, clothing, lifestyle and other traditions. The school often hosts representatives of the Assyrian communities of different countries who take part in the lessons and other events.

113. The subject “Russian language” is included in the curricula of basic general education schools of Armenia in grades 2-9. The training is carried out with textbooks published in Armenia, which took into account the peculiarities of teaching the Russian language in the national school. By the decision of the Government since 1999 Russian language classes were opened in a number of schools. Currently, there are 30 Russian-language schools in Yerevan. These schools have a special syllabus, textbooks and methodological manuals. As of 2019, there are Russian language classes in 13 schools of Yerevan Municipality, with about 2,987 Russian students. Relevant textbooks and methodological manuals have been provided to these schools.

114. The electronic versions of the published textbooks and syllabi of the Assyrian, Kurdish and Yezidi languages have been posted on the “Resources Database” subpage of the “Armenian Educational Portal” (<http://www.amedu.am>)⁵ operating within the Armenian Educational Network.

115. Pre-school education centres have been established in the school buildings in a number of rural communities of Armenia where there are classes for the children of national minorities aged 4-5 during the first half of the day. Such pre-school education centres operate in a number of general education schools in the Shirak, Aragatsotn, Armavir and Ararat Marzes of the Republic of Armenia.

⁵Electronic resources posted after the Fourth Report of the Republic of Armenia: 12 "Yezidi language" textbooks (1st-12th grades) (Published in 2015 - 2018) (http://lib.amedu.am/category/221/date_created/desc), a **standardised programme of the Assyrian language** (<https://lib.amedu.am/resource/27242>), a **curriculum of Assyrian language and Literature** (<https://lib.amedu.am/resource/27243>),

Article 15

The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.

116. The development of the culture of national minorities in Armenia, which provides cultural diversity, is the key priority of the Government. Efficient conditions are created to ensure the effective participation of national minorities in cultural life, as well as for the younger generation to be involved in youth programs.

117. According to parts 5 and 6 of Article 83 of the Electoral Code (Constitutional Law) adopted on 25 May 2016, the national electoral list may have a second part, wherein representatives of the first 4 national minorities with the largest number of resident population according to the data of the latest census preceding the elections may be included, in accordance with part 6 of this Article. A candidate for a Deputy, who is a representative of a national minority, included in the second part of the national electoral list may also be included in the first part of the national electoral list.

The procedure for granting mandates to representatives of national minorities in the second turn is described in part 9 of Article 95 of the Code.

118. To engage national minorities residing in the territory of the Republic of Armenia in various sectors and ensure their participation in those sectors, the following exhibitions, concerts and festivals presenting their ethnography and modern art have been organised:

In 2015 support was provided to:

- “Yezidi National Union” NGO for organising Yezidi cultural, educational and festive traditional events in the marzes of Armenia, as well as drawing exhibition for children and youth titled “With Pencil”;
- “Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Cultural Collaborations Centre” humanitarian NGO for holding a photo exhibition, dedicated to condemnation of the Yezidi Genocide, at “Naregatsi” Art Institute;
- Coordinating Council for National and Cultural Organisations of National Minorities of Armenia for organising an event dedicated to the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, entitled “National Minorities of Armenia against Genocides”;
- “Ilios’ Greek Community of Yerevan” NGO for translation of the documentary film about the Greek Genocide “Following the Traces of Argonauts”;
- “Menora” Jewish Cultural Centre NGO for organising an anniversary evening dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Honoured Art Worker of the Republic of Armenia, composer Willy Weiner;
- for publication (in Russian) of the book-collection “Patience to you, man” published for the Russian-speaking audience in Armenia and abroad.

In 2016 support was provided to:

- “Yezidi National Union” NGO for organising Yezidi cultural, educational and festive traditional events;
- “Sinjar’ Yezidi National Union” NGO for organising Yezidi New Year celebration;
- Greek ensemble “Kharitoni” to ensure its participation in the international folk dance festival titled “Grape festival ‘The harvest by the centuries, Stimaga” held in the Hellenic Republic;
- “Menora” Jewish Cultural Centre for recording and publishing the audio disk of choral pieces titled “Willy Weiner & Friends” of the Honoured Art Worker of the Republic of Armenia, musician-composer William Weiner.

In 2017 support was provided to:

- “Yezidi National Committee” NGO for organising the Khedr Navi Feast of Yezidis;
- “Yezidi National Union” NGO for organising events dedicated to Yezidi traditional festivities (“Charshama Sare Sale” Yezidis' New Year, “Chle Havine” feast) in Zovuni and Yeghvard;
- “Nerka” educational and cultural NGO for organising the cultural festival of national minorities aimed at dissemination of culture, preservation and development of traditions of national minorities living in Armenia;

In 2018 support was provided to:

- “Yezidi National Committee” NGO for organising Yezidi cultural, educational and festive traditional events;
- “Yezidi National Union” NGO for maintaining “Yezdikhana” newspaper covering the living, culture and creative life of Yezidis living in Armenia;
- “Kurdish National Council of Armenia” NGO for implementing the complex programme of cultural events on the occasion of the Solidarity Day of the Kurdish People. Each year, for the support of cultural events of national minorities of the Republic of Armenia, budgetary allocations have been envisaged under the “Support to the Culture of National Minorities” sub-programme of the “State Support to Implementation of Cultural Events” programme within the framework of the annual and mid-term expenditure programmes of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia. In particular, under the aforementioned sub-programme AMD 14,077,000 thousand was allocated in 2015, AMD 14,797,000 in 2016, AMD 14,432,000 in 2017, and AMD 9,425,000 in 2018. In 2019 under the “Support to National Minorities” programme AMD 15,000,000 was allocated for cultural events as a grant.

119. In 2016, for long-term conscientious, faithful and efficient work and on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia Medal of Gratitude was awarded by the decree of the President of the Republic to

- member of the Union of Composers of the Republic of Armenia, music scholar, journalist Jamila Jamil Jasim (Kurdish community);
- duduk maker, duduk player Mikhail Sadoyev (Assyrian community).

Article 16

The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present Framework Convention.

120. On 8 December 2015, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia ratified Articles 5 and 6, point 2 of Article 7 and point 3 of Article 10 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Thus, Armenia has undertaken to implement all of the provisions of the Charter.

121. Administrative-territorial reforms were launched in 2016. 465 communities were involved in the process of community consolidation, as a result of which 52 communities were formed. The number of communities not involved in the consolidation process is 450. The total number of communities is 502 (915 at the beginning of the process). While implementing the process of consolidation of communities, the Government has always refrained from establishing such unions of communities that would change the structural composition of the population in the territories that are populated by persons belonging to national minorities.

122. Thus, 11 communities densely populated by Yezidis were consolidated in the Aragatsotn Marz, establishing the Alagyaz community. The Arzni community of Kotayk Marz where Assyrians are compactly populated was not merged into any other community, as there are only Armenian-populated communities adjacent to the community, and merging with those communities would change the structure of the Assyrian population in the newly established community. It is envisaged to continue administrative-territorial reforms in Armenia. The Government will remain committed to the policy adopted so far in respect of communities inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities.

123. Alagyaz enlarged community, which was formed in Aragats region of Aragatsotn Marz by the decision of the Government in 2017 within the framework of the community enlargement program, comprises Alagyaz, Avshen, Sadunts, Charchakis, Mirak, Shenkani, Jamshlu, Rya-Taza, Kaniashir, Sipan and Mijnatun settlements.

Article 17

1. The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts across frontiers with persons lawfully staying in other States, in particular those with whom they share an ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, or a common cultural heritage.

2. The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate in the activities of non-governmental organisations, both at the national and international levels.

Article 18

1. The Parties shall endeavour to conclude, where necessary, bilateral and multilateral agreements with other States, in particular neighbouring States, in order to ensure the protection of persons belonging to the national minorities concerned.

2. Where relevant, the Parties shall take measures to encourage transfrontier operation.

124. The Republic of Armenia encourages co-operation of national minorities with their countries of origin. The cultures of national minorities of the Republic are also presented abroad to some extent. Every year the representatives of national minorities of Armenia participate in international conferences, forums and other events.

125. In 2016, the “Kharitoni” ensemble of the Greek Community of Armenia participated in the “Grape Festival ‘The harvest by the centuries, Stimaga” international folk dance festival in Greece. The Republic of Armenia is ready to create the necessary conditions to fulfil its commitment to Assyrian, Greek, Kurdish and Yezidi languages, but the lack of financial resources makes it difficult.

126. In case of Georgia and Iran, two bordering states of Armenia, contacts are carried out freely and without constraints, as was the case in the past. In regard to Azerbaijan, immediate contacts with the minorities residing in that country have become impossible since 1988 when the policy of ethnic cleansing implemented by the Azerbaijani authorities turned into obvious aggression and massive military actions against Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of which not only the border with this country has been closed up to date, but also Azerbaijan is carrying on mass propaganda of xenophobia and racism at the state level which directly affects the minorities and undoubtedly has an adverse impact on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

127. The Republic of Armenia supports contacts of non-governmental organisations between different countries as an important means for confidence-building, whereas Azerbaijan persecutes all the NGOs that wish to co-operate with Armenian organisations.

128. Armenia has drawn the attention of international organisations, including the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe to the gunshots that Azerbaijan regularly fires at settlements near the borderline, as well as the fact that civilians were targeted

during the large-scale military operations that Azerbaijan unleashed against Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) in April 2016. The Azerbaijani aggression was accompanied by gross violations of the norms of International Humanitarian Law, particularly by cases of torture of women and the elderly (for detailed information about the aforementioned, see the Interim Public Report of the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh that was disseminated as an official document during the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly (<http://undocs.org/A/70/863>)).

As a result of the Azerbaijani atrocities in April, more than 2000 persons left Talish, Martakert, Martuni and Hadrut villages of Nagorno-Karabakh and moved to Armenia.

129. One of the cases of particular brutality and violation of International Humanitarian Law was the case of decapitation of the citizen of the Republic of Armenia, Yezidi Kyaram Sloyan by the Azerbaijani armed forces in the style of the “Islamic State”, which was later shown in cities and villages and subsequently posted on social media.

Article 19

The Parties undertake to respect and implement the principles enshrined in the present Framework Convention making, where necessary, only those limitations, restrictions or derogations which are provided for in international legal instruments, in particular the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, in so far as they are relevant to the rights and freedoms flowing from the said principles.

130. The draft Law “On making amendments and supplements to the Law of the Republic of Armenia ‘On refugees and asylum’”, aimed at bringing the legislation of Armenia into compliance with the requirements of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, was presented to the 6th convocation of the National Assembly of Armenia, but consideration of the draft Law had been postponed.