

The state policy implemented in the field of protection of ethnic and cultural diversity in the Republic of Azerbaijan is based on the multicultural values and democratic principles of the Azerbaijani people.

Azerbaijan has joined major international conventions on human rights and those that are aimed at promoting non-discrimination and tolerance. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe was signed by the government in 1995 and ratified by the Law of 2000. In 1996 the Republic of Azerbaijan joined the United Nations International Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In 2001, the Republic of Azerbaijan acceded to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Republic of Azerbaijan joined the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan of 2009 which entered into force in Azerbaijan in 2000.

The Baku International Center for Multiculturalism (BICM), established in 2014 has become a platform for dialogue and exchange of views between ethnic and religious minorities. Ethnic and religious minority organizations are represented at the Center's Coordinating Council. At the same time, BICM implements multifaceted projects to promote unique cultures of ethnic minorities living in the country.

Since 2015 the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism has been organizing the International Winter School of Multiculturalism and the International Summer School of Multiculturalism, which are attended by local and foreign students from different countries. International organizations such as UNESCO, Aladdin project, Erasmus + have also supported these summer and winter schools.

In 2016, a series of events promoting coexistence culture, tolerance and multicultural traditions were held in the country within the "Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan" announced by the relevant decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Starting from October 2018 the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism has launched a joint TV project with Azerbaijan Television (AzTV) which airs the bi-monthly program "Multiculturalism". It discusses various aspects of Azerbaijan's multiculturalism policy, as well as traditions of tolerance and a culture of coexistence.

The subjects of "Azerbaijani multiculturalism" and "Introduction to multiculturalism" are taught in the higher education institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and a high culture of coexistence is instilled in students studying at universities and institutes. BICM is closely involved in the training of teachers involved in the teaching of these subjects.

Since 2020, BICM publishes twice a year an international scientific journal called the International Journal of Multiculturalism in English language. The editorial staff of the scientific publication is composed of well-known foreign experts in this field. This journal is the first scientific publication in the field of multiculturalism in the Caucasus.

Women and youth belonging to national minorities take an active part in the public life of the country. Currently, there are numerous women's and youth organizations belonging to ethnic minorities in the country. More than 50 socio-cultural organizations of ethnic minorities are officially registered. Various women's and youth organizations of national minorities operate under these socio-cultural organizations or separately.

Socio-cultural organizations of ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan have the opportunity to receive financial assistance by applying to the Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with relevant grant projects.

Azerbaijan State Radio broadcasts regular programs in Russian, Lezgi, Kurdish, Talysh, Georgian and Armenian, publishes more than 15 newspapers and magazines in their

languages, and operates 5 regional TV and radio channels in ethnic minority areas. Numerous periodicals are published in the languages of ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan.

The Ministry of Science and Education has a department for the development and publication of textbooks and programs in the languages of national minorities. At the same time, a department entitled "Methodology of teaching national minority languages" was established in 1999 at the Scientific Research Institute of Pedagogical Sciences to coordinate activities related to the development and publication of curricula, textbooks, dictionaries, teaching and other materials in the languages of national minorities.

Mother tongue lessons (Avar, Kurdish, Lezgi, Talysh, Sahur, Tat, Udi, Khinalig, Hebrew) were organized in secondary schools (primary grades) in ethnic minority areas. Languages of ethnic minorities are taught in 386 public schools in the country. Alphabets, curricula and other textbooks, school dictionaries are published in various minority languages (Russian, Avar, Talysh, Kurdish, Lezgi, Sahur, Tat, Udi, Khinalig, etc.) at the expense of the state, and this work continues on a regular basis.

At present, there are 16 Russian-language secondary schools in Azerbaijan and 10 Georgian-language secondary schools, 345 international secondary schools (Azerbaijani-Russian, Azerbaijani-Georgian, Azerbaijani-Russian-Georgian).

The teaching of Hebrew language was organized at the Russian department of the secondary school No. 46 in Baku in the complete classes of children of Jewish origin, and at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Baku State University. In October 2010 Khabad Or-Avner Jewish educational complex for Jewish children was built in Baku by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Or-Avner Foundation. This educational institution serves as a cultural center for Jews living in the Caucasus and the Caspian region as a whole.

In 2020, the world's first Museum of Mountain Jews was opened in the Red Settlement of Guba region.

Branches of higher education institutions, technical and humanitarian colleges operate in the regions where national minorities live compactly, and Lankaran State University operates in the southern region.

96% of the population of Azerbaijan are Muslims, and 4% are Christians, Jews and members of other religions. Since the beginning of the process of state re-registration of religious organizations (01.09.2009), 970 religious organizations have been registered. From a confessional point of view, 933 of them are Islamic and 37 are non-Islamic (Christian - 26; Jewish - 8; Baha'i - 2; Krishna - 1). Currently there are 16 churches and 7 synagogues in Azerbaijan.

Many historical and religious monuments in Baku and other cities and settlements of the country, as well as in the southern and northern regions where ethnic minorities live compactly, have been repaired at the expense of the state budget and philanthropists. Dozens of churches and synagogues, including Albanian, German-Lutheran, Catholic, Russian and Georgian Orthodox churches, have been restored and opened to the public.

The Jen Mironosets Cathedral, which was not used for its intended purpose during the Soviet period, was repaired and renovated by an Azerbaijani businessman and put into use by the Russian Orthodox community.

A Roman Catholic Church was built in the center of Baku and its official opening ceremony was held in March 2008. In May 2011, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Holy See signed the Agreement on the Legal Status of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The historic Lutheran Church in Baku was renovated by the order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and put into operation in December 2010. German-Lutheran churches have been thoroughly restored in the regions (Shamkir and Goygol districts).

On November 15, 2013, the Orthodox Religious and Cultural Center of the Eparchies of Baku and Azerbaijan was opened with the participation of President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

At the initiative and support of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, two new synagogues were built for European and mountain Jews in the center of Baku in 2002 and 2011, respectively. The Gilaki synagogue in the Red settlement of Guba region was put into operation after major renovation in 2006.

In June 2011, the opening ceremony of the Church of St. Nino, a Georgian Orthodox temple in the Gakh region, was held. In 2003-2006, the Chotari Church in the Nij settlement of the Gabala region was renovated. The Mother of Mary Albanian Church was restored and given to the use of the Albanian-Udi religious community.

By the order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, since 2011 the financial assistance from the state budget is allocated to religious organizations, including Christian (Orthodox, Catholic, various Protestant communities), Jewish, Baha'i, Baku Krishna Consciousness religious communities.

Hatred and intolerance towards ethnic groups lead to more systematic violations of human rights, crimes, wars etc. Hate speech is one of the most powerful means for strengthening and spreading the ideology of hatred. Violation of norms and principles of international law by mass-scale violation of human rights and human losses continue to hamper peace, security and stability in different parts of the world.

Manifestations of violent racism, intolerance and discrimination, senseless attacks against individuals and groups due to their identity continue to take place. February 26, 2023, marks the 31st anniversary of the Khojaly genocide committed by the armed forces of Armenia against Azerbaijan. One of the gravest crimes committed against the civilian population and the most tragic page of the First Karabakh War was the occupation of Khojaly city. Before the conflict, 7,000 people were living in this town. Over the night of the 25 to 26 February 1992 the armed forces of Armenia, with the help of the infantry guards regiment No.366 of the former USSR destroyed Khojaly and with particular brutality implemented carnage over its peaceful population. As a result of the Khojaly genocide, 5379 inhabitants of the city were forcefully expelled, 1275 were captured and taken hostage (the fate of 150 of them, including 68 women and 26 children, remains unknown to date) and were tortured, 487 were injured, 8 families were completely annihilated, 130 children lost one and 25 children lost both parents, 613 people, including 63 children, 106 women and 70 elderly brutally murdered. The targeted massacre of civilians in Khojaly was a crime stemming from a policy of ethnic hatred and racial discrimination against Azerbaijanis at the state level in Armenia and was aimed at massacring people simply because of their ethnicity.

Deliberate destruction, looting, humiliating graves, misuse of mosques, as well as "gregorianization" of ancient Albanian temples violating the 1954 Hague Conventions, desecrating for years religious and cultural heritage of Azerbaijan by Armenia is another example of fueling contemporary forms of racism and related intolerance. Out of 67 mosques in the then occupied territories of Azerbaijan, 65 have been razed to the ground and the remaining 2 have been severely damaged and desecrated, including by being used as stables for pigs and cows in total disrespect to all Muslims of the world. Even the graveyards had been desecrated, destroyed, and looted in the then occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

According to the "Anti-defamation League", Armenia is the second most anti-Semitic nation in Europe. Influential Jewish magazine "Forward" collected a list of monuments around the globe which includes 22 in Armenia that honour Nazi collaborators.

Glorification a collaborator for the "Third Reich", the Nazi general Garegin Nzhdeh to the rank of "national hero of Armenians" by erecting a monument in the capital city of Armenia, renaming streets and creating Nzhdeh medal for military and civilians by the Ministry of

Defense of Armenia is another proof of demonstrating a sympathy and loyalty to the Nazi past. Azerbaijan's state archive possess numerous documents from the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic's Extraordinary Investigation Commission on massacres perpetrated against Azerbaijanis in Zangazur region between 1918-1920 by the Armenian paramilitary groups headed by Garegin Nzhdeh and others. According to the findings of the Extraordinary Investigative Commission, as a result of Nzhdeh's "scorched earth" policy, more than 10,000 Azerbaijani civilians in Zangazur region were killed and 115 Azerbaijani villages razed to the ground. During the Second World War, Nzhdeh had joined the ranks of Nazi Germany and conducted the mass killing of Jews, Ukrainians, Russians and others as one of Hitler's generals. Dashnak movement echoing Aryan supremacy theories of the Nazis and advocating for an "Armenian supreme race" is still active.

The policy of racial discrimination has been implemented by Armenia in an organized and systematic way also by creating military affiliated organizations such as VoMA and ASPET. Of particular concern is indoctrination of the children in Armenia with the ethnic and racial hatred. Video footages circulated in open sources confirm that VoMA and similar ethnonationalist hate armed group POGA promotes the racist "Nzhdehism" ideology. Children attendees of military trainings are taught the quotes of Garegin Nzhdeh, a Nazi collaborator, who is known as the founder of notorious "Tsekhagron" ideology built upon "racial supremacy" of Armenian race (Tsekhagron) and promotes hatred against Azerbaijanis.

During the 44-Day War in 2020, Armenia's recruitment of children in its armed forces became especially wide-spread in gross violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. In this regard, on 28 October, 2020 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan made an appeal to international organizations and the letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations was circulated as a document of the General Assembly, and of the Security Council.

VoMA currently continues enlist and train civilians, including children in Armenia. In addition to numerous video and photo materials publicized through the social media account of VoMA, the involvement of children into military training has also been widely documented by international media outlets.

Despite widely publicized information on such internationally prohibited activities, Armenia has taken no action to prohibit such organizations as VoMA, POGA and similar armed ethnonationalist hate groups to recruit and exploit children. Among others, this constitutes a clear breach of Armenia's obligation under Article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. It is also a gross violation by Armenia of the provisional measure of the International Court of Justice regarding taking "all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred, including by organizations and private persons in its territory, targeted at persons of Azerbaijani national or ethnic origin".