

Armenia

Trafficking Routes

Armenia is mainly a country of origin for trafficking in women and children. The most common destination countries for Armenian trafficking victims are Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Other destination countries include Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Poland, and Russia.

Some Armenian women have traveled to Turkey or even the UAE via Georgia, and to Poland or the UAE via Russia.¹

Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

The sharp rise in poverty, cuts in social spending, and the removal of exit controls since the collapse of the Soviet Union have caused nearly 1 million people to leave Armenia since 1991. Gender inequalities and the lack of work opportunities offering decent pay compel women to seek employment outside of Armenia, thereby making them vulnerable to traffickers' false promises of legitimate work abroad.²

Armenian trafficking victims are recruited primarily through informal channels; that is, they get information on job opportunities abroad from friends or acquaintances. These recruiters are "the first chain in a well-organized international criminal group that works across the borders."³ Corruption plays a role in the trafficking infrastructure as well. Corrupt local authorities are said to receive bribes for altering information in identity papers and documents. According to one imprisoned pimp in Armenia, her group bribed an official working at Yerevan Zvartnots airport to facilitate the departure of women and children to Dubai.⁴

Forms of Trafficking

Trafficking in Armenian women to the UAE is entirely related to the sex industry; trafficking in women to Turkey is mostly for exploitative labor but includes forced prostitution. UAE immigration officials and representatives of Armenian Airlines have described "a relatively continuous movement of new

¹ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

² International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

³ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), p. 24, http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

⁴ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

women being brought and others deported” between the two countries, and they have spoken of deportations of Armenian women from Dubai “on every flight.”⁵ According to a 2001 study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a pimp interviewed in detention claimed to have transported a minimum of five women per flight to Dubai for a period of 2 years, a total of over 500 women per year.⁶

Trafficking from Armenia occurs mostly from urban areas. The majority of female trafficking victims surveyed for a 2001 IOM study were divorced, and over half had a secondary education. Some women are recruited through newspaper advertisements.⁷ Armenian newspapers carry ads seeking “young and pretty girls for well-paid jobs abroad”; other advertisements seek women for marriage to foreigners.⁸ The recruiter is linked with an employer or pimp in the country of destination. Middlemen, such as Turkish tour bus operators, are also known to recruit vulnerable women for employers or pimps abroad.⁹

One young Armenian woman was lured to UAE with the promise of a job as a waitress. Instead, her passport was confiscated at the airport by her agent, who forced her into prostitution the next day. After several months, she and several other girls managed to escape and return to Armenia. A female Yerevan resident was found to have organized the trafficking of the girls to the UAE, earning US\$47,000 for her trafficking schemes. She was sentenced to 1 year in prison.¹⁰

Trafficking in children in Armenia is a new phenomenon that has arisen because of the deterioration of the economy and social services in the country. Children living in institutions and street children are especially vulnerable to trafficking. Children have been forced to work in the sex industry within Armenia.¹¹ Baby trafficking for illegal adoptions abroad is also said to occur from Armenia.¹²

⁵ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), p. 30, http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

⁶ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

⁷ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

⁸ Julia Hakobyan, “The Tragedy of Trafficking: Organizations Want to See a More Active Fight in Armenia,” *ArmeniaNow.com*, 24 October 2003.

⁹ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

¹⁰ Julia Hakobyan, “The Tragedy of Trafficking: Organizations Want to See a More Active Fight in Armenia,” *ArmeniaNow.com*, 24 October 2003.

¹¹ International Organization for Migration, *Trafficking in Women and Children from the Republic of Armenia: A Study* (Yerevan, Armenia: International Organization for Migration, September 2001), http://www.iom.int/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATION/EN/Armenia_traff_report.pdf.

¹² Omnik Krikorian, “Concerns over Prostitution and the Trafficking of Women and Children Outlined,” *Armenian Online Weekly*, November 2002, http://www.hairenik.com/armenianweekly/november_2002/society004.htm.

Government Responses

Under the Criminal Code, trafficking for the purpose of “sexual exploitation or forced labor, by means of threat or use of force, of fraud, of ...dependence, of blackmail, of threat of destruction or damage to property, if this was done for mercenary purposes,” is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 1 year, by arrest for up to 2 months, or by imprisonment from 1 to 4 years.¹³ If the crime is committed against a minor, against two or more persons, by use of violence or by threat of violence, or under a prior agreement of a group of persons, the punishment is enhanced to correctional labor for up to 2 years or imprisonment for up to 7 years.¹⁴ Imprisonment for up to 8 years can be imposed if the crime was committed by an organized group or if the victim’s death or other grave consequences affecting the victim were caused by the negligence of the offender.¹⁵

The act of kidnapping for purposes of “prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery servitude, or removal of human organs” is punishable by imprisonment from 2 to 5 years.¹⁶ An enhanced punishment of up to 8 or 10 years can apply under certain aggravated circumstances.¹⁷ Moreover, the Criminal Code states that “making a person donate parts of his body or tissues for transplantation through violence or threat of violence is punished with imprisonment of up to 3 years.” The punishment increases to imprisonment for up to 10 years under aggravated circumstances.¹⁸

The Criminal Code punishes forced donation of parts of the body or tissues by imprisonment for up to 4 years. This punishment may also include deprivation of the right to practice certain activities for up to 3 years.¹⁹ If the crime is committed against a helpless person, a person financially or otherwise related on the offender, or a minor, the punishment increases imprisonment for up to 5 years and may include deprivation of the right to practice certain activities.²⁰ Punishment is further enhanced to imprisonment for up to 10 years if the crime is committed by an organized group.²¹

¹³ Article 132(1).

¹⁴ Article 132(2).

¹⁵ Article 132(3).

¹⁶ Article 131(1).

¹⁷ Articles 131(2) and 131(3). Under article 131(2), the aggravated circumstances that enhance the punishment for up to 8 years are as follows: the offense is committed by a group of persons under prior agreement; the offense is committed by use of violence dangerous to life or health or by use of threats of violence; the offense is committed by use of weapons or items used as weapons; the crime is committed against a minor, a pregnant woman, or two or more persons; the crime is committed with mercenary motives; or the perpetrator of the crime was previously convicted for kidnapping. Under article 131(3), the punishment is imprisonment for up to 10 years if the crime was committed by an organized group or if the victim’s death or other grave injuries to the health of the victim were caused by negligence of the offender.

¹⁸ Article 126.

¹⁹ Article 126(1).

²⁰ Article 126(2).

²¹ Article 126(3).

The code punishes illegal deprivation of freedom other than kidnapping by correctional labor for up to 2 years, by arrest for up to 3 months, or by imprisonment for up to 2 years.²²

Involving a child in antisocial activities, such as alcoholic drink or drug use, prostitution, or preparation and dissemination of pornography, is a crime punishable by correctional labor for up to 1 year, arrest for up to 2 months, or imprisonment for up to 5 years.²³ If this offense is committed by a parent, a teacher, or any other person in charge of bringing up a child, the punishment increases to correctional labor for up to 2 years, arrest for up to 2 years, or imprisonment for up to 5 years and may also include deprivation of the right to practice certain activities for up to 3 years.²⁴ In addition, if the crime was committed in relation to two or more persons or by use of violence or threat to use violence, the punishment is imprisonment for up to 6 years.²⁵

The code punishes child trafficking by imprisonment for up to 7 years.²⁶ In addition, the code prohibits illegal separation of a child from the parents, substitution of a child through abuse of an official position, illegal transportation of a child from one state to another, or transportation of a child to harvest the child's body parts or tissues for transplantation. These crimes are subject to imprisonment for up to 8 years.²⁷

A person who forces a woman to have sexual intercourse by abusing her financial or other dependence on the perpetrator can be punished by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 2 years, or by imprisonment for up to 1 year.²⁸ Having sexual intercourse with a person younger than 16 years is punishable by correctional labor for up to 2 years or by imprisonment for up to 2 years.²⁹

The Administrative Code punishes anyone involved in prostitution by a fine of 50 to 100 percent of the statutory minimum salary. The recurrence of involvement in prostitution within 1 year after the punishment results in a fine of up to double the amount of the minimum salary.³⁰

Involving another person in prostitution by means of violence, abuse of a dependent position, or deception is punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 1 year, by arrest for up to 3 months, or by imprisonment for up to 2 years.³¹

²² Article 133(1). Under article 133(2), if certain aggravated circumstances apply, the punishment is imprisonment for up to 5 years. Such circumstances include the following: the offense is committed by a group of persons under prior agreement; the offense is committed by use of violence dangerous to life or health or by use of threats of violence; the crime is committed by use of weapons or items used as weapons; the crime is committed against a minor, a pregnant woman, or two or more persons; or the crime is committed with mercenary motives. Furthermore, under article 133(3), imprisonment for up to 8 years can be imposed if the crime was committed by an organized group or if the victim's death or other grave injuries to the health of the victim were caused by negligence of the offender.

²³ Article 166(1).

²⁴ Article 166(2).

²⁵ Article 166(3).

²⁶ Article 168.

²⁷ Article 167(2).

²⁸ Article 140.

²⁹ Article 141.

³⁰ Article 179.1.

³¹ Article 261(1).

If the crime involves the prostitution of a child or is committed by an organized group, it is punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 2 years, or by imprisonment for up to 6 years.³²

The Criminal Code prohibits the maintenance of brothels and pimping. These offenses are punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 1 year, by arrest for up to 3 months, or by imprisonment for up to 5 years.³³

The illegal manufacture, sale, or dissemination of pornographic materials is punishable by a fine, by arrest for up to 2 months, or by imprisonment for up to 2 years.³⁴ Forcing a minor's participation in the creation of software, videos, films, pictures, or other material of pornographic nature is punishable by a fine, by arrest for up to 3 months, or by imprisonment for up to 3 years.³⁵

The code criminalizes attempts to legalize illegally obtained revenue. Punishment is a fine or imprisonment for up to 4 years.³⁶ The code also punishes the acquisition and sale of property obtained in an obviously criminal way by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 2 years, or by arrest for up to 3 months.³⁷

Abusing a position of official authority is punishable by a fine, by deprivation of a right to hold certain posts for up to 5 years, by arrest for up to 3 months, or by imprisonment for up to 4 years.³⁸

The Criminal Code outlaws bribery. A state official who takes bribes is punishable by a fine or by imprisonment for up to 5 years, with deprivation of the right to practice certain activities for up to 3 years.³⁹ Giving a bribe to a state official is punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 2 years, by arrest for up to 3 years, or by imprisonment for up to 3 years.⁴⁰ Bribery mediation is punishable by a fine, by arrest for up to 2 months, or by imprisonment for up to 3 years.⁴¹

The Criminal Code, as well as the Administrative Code, punishes anyone involved in illegal entrepreneurial and illegal banking activities.⁴² Punishment under the Criminal Code is a fine, arrest for up to 3 months, or imprisonment ranging from 2 to 3 years.⁴³ Punishment under the Administrative Code is a fine.⁴⁴

Illegal departure from and entry into the Republic of Armenia is an offense punishable by imprisonment for up to 3 years. If an organized group or a group

³² Article 262(2)

³³ Article 262.

³⁴ Article 263(1).

³⁵ Article 263(2).

³⁶ Article 190.

³⁷ Article 216.

³⁸ Article 308.

³⁹ Article 311.

⁴⁰ Article 312.

⁴¹ Article 313.

⁴² Criminal Code, article 188, and Administrative Code, article 169.

⁴³ Article 188.

⁴⁴ Article 169.

with a prior agreement to commit the offense is involved in illegally crossing a state border, imprisonment for up to 7 years applies.⁴⁵

The falsification or fabrication of documents or the use or sale of forged documents, stamps, seals, forms, or state plate numbers for vehicles is punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 1 year, or by imprisonment for up to 2 years. If the crime is committed by a group under a prior agreement, the punishment increases to 2 years of correctional labor or to imprisonment for up to 4 years.⁴⁶ In addition, forgery by an official is punishable by a fine, by correctional labor for up to 2 years, by arrest for up to 3 months, or by imprisonment for up to 2 years.⁴⁷

The Interagency Commission on Human Trafficking was established by a prime minister's decree on 14 October 2002. The commission is chaired by the Foreign Ministry and coordinates the efforts of relevant organizations and agencies in researching the trafficking situation in Armenia, in raising public awareness of the problem, and in developing a National Plan of Action.⁴⁸

In 2004, the government of Armenia approved the national program for 2004–06 on the fight against international trafficking. The state budget of the country has allocated US\$11,000 for its implementation; the remaining funds will be provided by foreign donor organizations.⁴⁹

Between summer 2003 and summer 2004, Armenian law enforcement officials instituted 19 criminal cases on accusations of procurement of women and trafficking in persons.⁵⁰

Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan and the permanent representative of the UNDP, Lise Grande, signed a program of cooperation to combat trafficking in Yerevan in March 2004.⁵¹

Nongovernmental and International Organization Responses

Hope and Help is an NGO that works to assist women in prostitution who encounter problems with local police. It also plans to provide shelter, medical services, psychological counseling, and job training for repatriated victims of

⁴⁵ Article 329. This article does not apply to a person entering the territory of the Republic of Armenia without valid document for the purpose of seeking asylum.

⁴⁶ Article 325.

⁴⁷ Article 314.

⁴⁸ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "OSCE Yerevan Workshop Focuses on Identification of Trafficking Victims," press release, 22 December 2003.

⁴⁹ "Efficiency of Activities of Law-Enforcement Bodies of Armenia on Fight against Trafficking Has Increased in Armenia," *Arminfo*, 13 July 2004.

⁵⁰ "Efficiency of Activities of Law-Enforcement Bodies of Armenia on Fight against Trafficking Has Increased in Armenia," *Arminfo*, 13 July 2004.

⁵¹ "Armenia, UN Body Sign Memo on Fight against Trafficking," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 30 March 2004.

trafficking.⁵² The organization recently instituted a 24-hour hotline for trafficking victims and their families throughout Armenia.⁵³

The Women's Rights Center in Yerevan has published a resource guide titled "Avoid the Trap!" The guide contains lists of Armenian institutions and organizations that provide assistance to women, domestic violence victims, and trafficking victims. The guide also provides information about embassies in Armenia and abroad.⁵⁴

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has developed an antitrafficking program in Armenia in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and IOM and coordinated by the Armenian government. Services provided under the program include a victims' shelter, medical care, and psychological, job, and legal counseling.⁵⁵

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) office in Yerevan organized a 3-day training session for experts and interviewers from both nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in June 2004.⁵⁶ Antitrafficking activities of the OSCE office in Yerevan include support for the development of the National Plan of Action for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons from the Republic of Armenia and the organization of roundtable discussions and seminars on the topic. Currently, the office is conducting a comprehensive legal gap analysis in the existing legal framework for victim and witness protection.⁵⁷ In December 2003, OSCE conducted a training course on victim identification and treatment for law enforcement, border control, and consular personnel and for NGO representatives. Armenian consular staff in Greece, Russia, and the UAE, as well as Russian consular authorities in Turkey, participated in the event.⁵⁸

In late 2003, the US government allocated US\$170,000 to IOM's Yerevan office for two antitrafficking projects.⁵⁹ Under the first project, IOM planned to organize seminars for Armenian embassy officials abroad to teach them how to deal with illegal immigrants and identify trafficking victims.⁶⁰ Under the second project, IOM aimed to support Armenian NGOs that provide support and services to trafficking victims.⁶¹

⁵² Julia Hakobyan, "The Tragedy of Trafficking: Organizations Want to See a More Active Fight in Armenia," *ArmeniaNow.com*, 24 October 2003.

⁵³ "Round-the-Clock 'Hot Line' Accessible to Trafficking Victims," *Arminfo*, 13 May 2004.

⁵⁴ Community Response to Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Humans, "Armenia Publications," 2 August 2004, <http://www.winrock.org.ua/DOS/En/lpublic/armenia.php>.

⁵⁵ UMCOR-Armenia, "Capacity Building Support and Victim Assistance," 2 August 2004, <http://www.umcor.am>. See also "Armenia: Human Trafficking is Ruinous," *UMCOR Hotline*, 13 April 2004.

⁵⁶ "OSCE Office Holds Anti-trafficking Training in Armenia," *ArmeniaDiaspora.com*, 29 June 2004.

⁵⁷ "OSCE Armenian Office Conducts Training on Trafficking in Persons," *Arminfo*, 28 June 2004.

⁵⁸ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "OSCE Yerevan Workshop Focuses on Identification of Trafficking Victims," press release, 22 December 2003.

⁵⁹ "USA Allocates Grant to Armenia to Fight Trafficking," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 13 October 2003.

⁶⁰ Julia Hakobyan, "The Tragedy of Trafficking: Organizations Want to See a More Active Fight in Armenia," *ArmeniaNow.com*, 24 October 2003.

⁶¹ "USA Allocates Grant to Armenia to Fight Trafficking," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 13 October 2003.

Multilateral Initiatives

A 2-day conference of the Interior Ministers' Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) took place in Moldova in June 2004. Representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan participated. The council was to discuss the criminal situation in the CIS and methods to combat drug trafficking and international terrorism, giving special attention to trafficking in persons and illegal migration.⁶²

In May 2005, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Convention goes beyond the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and enhances the capacity of member states to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and protect the human rights of victims of trafficking. The 46 member states of the Council of Europe represent countries of origin, transit, and destination for victims of trafficking.⁶³

⁶² "Moldova to Host Conference of CIS Interior Ministers, *Arminfo*, 15 June 2004.

⁶³ Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and its Explanatory Report*, Warsaw, 16 May 2005, http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/PDF_Conv_197_Trafficking_E.pdf.