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## PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND CURRENT SITUATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN AZERBAIJAN

**Summary:** Between 2015 and 2024, Azerbaijan has developed a comprehensive legal, institutional, and policy framework aimed at protecting girls and women from violence. National measures, aligned with international standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), combine legislation, institutional mechanisms, national action plans, and collaborative projects to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Legislative acts, including the Law on Guarantees of Gender Equality (2006) and the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence (2010), provide legal protections, while dedicated institutions, such as the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, operationalize these frameworks through support centers and monitoring mechanisms.

**Key words:** gender-based violence, protection mechanisms, women's rights, legislative framework, institutional support, Azerbaijan.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has developed a comprehensive system of policies, legislative measures, institutional structures, and practical initiatives aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls. These efforts reflect a commitment to aligning national practices with international human rights standards, particularly those outlined in conventions ratified by the country. The evolution of this framework stems from the recognition that gender-based violence constitutes a fundamental barrier to social progress, economic development, and individual security. Historical factors, including the transition from Soviet-era structures to independent statehood in 1991, have influenced the formulation of these strategies, as societal norms rooted in

patriarchal traditions necessitated targeted interventions (United Nations, 2024). Government actions in this domain integrate legal reforms, capacity-building programs, and collaborative partnerships with international organizations to foster an environment where women and girls experience protection from physical, psychological, economic, and sexual forms of violence. The core objective involves not only reactive responses to incidents but also proactive prevention through education, awareness campaigns, and systemic monitoring. This approach ensures that the state's apparatus functions cohesively to uphold the dignity and rights of female citizens, thereby contributing to broader national goals of sustainable development and equality.

Azerbaijan's engagement with global norms began prominently with the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1995, which laid the groundwork for subsequent domestic policies. Over the ensuing decades, the government has enacted specific laws and established dedicated bodies to operationalize these commitments. For instance, the establishment of specialized committees and monitoring groups demonstrates a structured methodology for implementation. Furthermore, the integration of gender perspectives into national development plans underscores the strategic importance of this issue. Data from official reports indicate that these measures have led to increased reporting of violence cases, enhanced support services, and gradual shifts in public attitudes. The framework's effectiveness relies on multi-stakeholder involvement, encompassing state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners, to address the multifaceted nature of violence (Mahmudova, L, 2024). By examining the legislative base, institutional mechanisms, ongoing projects, and evaluation processes, one gains a clear understanding of how Azerbaijan constructs its response to this pervasive challenge.

The legislative architecture in Azerbaijan provides a robust foundation for combating violence against women and girls, encompassing a series of laws that define offenses, prescribe penalties, and outline protective procedures. The Law on Guarantees of Gender Equality, adopted in 2006, establishes equal rights for men and women across all spheres of life, including employment, education, and family relations, while explicitly targeting the elimination of gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence. This law mandates state institutions to incorporate gender considerations into policy-making, thereby creating a preventive barrier against discriminatory practices that often escalate into

violent acts.

These domestic laws align with international obligations, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which Azerbaijan ratified without reservations. The government has also incorporated elements from the Council of Europe's standards, although the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence remains under consideration for ratification. National action plans, such as the 2020-2023 National Action Plan on Combating Domestic Violence, operationalize these laws by setting timelines for implementation, allocating resources, and defining indicators for success (UN Women, 2024). For example, the plan mandates the creation of support centers and hotlines, ensuring that legal frameworks translate into tangible protections. Statistical evidence from state reports shows that these laws have facilitated a rise in convictions for domestic violence offenses, with enhanced penalties serving as deterrents. The legislative system thus functions as a cornerstone, providing both punitive measures against offenders and restorative justice for survivors, while fostering a culture of accountability.

Despite substantial progress, Azerbaijan faces distinct challenges in fully eradicating violence against women and girls, necessitating targeted enhancements to existing frameworks. Persistent patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes hinder effective implementation, as evidenced by underreporting in rural areas where cultural norms discourage victims from seeking help. Limited resources for support services, including a shortage of shelters—currently only three nationwide—exacerbate vulnerabilities, leaving many survivors without safe havens.

Enforcement gaps arise from inconsistent application of laws, with some cases resulting in minimal penalties that fail to deter perpetrators. International assessments highlight the need for ratification of the Istanbul Convention to bolster legal protections against all forms of gender-based violence. Moreover, data collection systems require strengthening to provide accurate statistics for evidence-based policy-making, as current mechanisms occasionally overlook intersectional factors like disability or ethnicity.

Pathways for enhancement involve expanding training programs to include more comprehensive gender-sensitive curricula for all relevant professionals, thereby improving case handling. Increasing the number of shelters and support centers, particularly in underserved regions, would enhance accessibility (European Union, ). Public awareness campaigns must intensify to

dismantle stereotypes, utilizing media and educational institutions for widespread dissemination. Strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations ensures diverse perspectives in policy development. By addressing these challenges through resource allocation and legal reforms, Azerbaijan solidifies its commitment to a violence-free environment for women and girls.

Evaluation and monitoring constitute essential components of Azerbaijan's strategy to combat violence against women and girls, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement. The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs leads annual reporting processes, compiling data on violence incidents, protection orders issued, and services provided. These reports incorporate indicators such as conviction rates and survivor satisfaction levels, drawn from inter-agency databases.

International mechanisms, including periodic reviews under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, provide external oversight. Azerbaijan's submissions to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women detail progress on national plans, highlighting achievements like the establishment of hotlines and training modules. Collaborative evaluations with partners like the Council of Europe assess alignment with global standards, identifying areas for refinement.

Monitoring groups at regional levels conduct on-the-ground assessments, tracking implementation and gathering feedback from beneficiaries. These processes reveal trends, such as rising reports indicating greater trust in systems, and inform adjustments to policies. Through rigorous evaluation, Azerbaijan maintains momentum in its efforts, adapting strategies to emerging needs and reinforcing the efficacy of its framework.

The Republic of Azerbaijan maintains a structured approach to eliminating violence against women and girls through integrated policies, legislative reforms, institutional frameworks, national strategies, and collaborative projects. These elements derive from the nation's commitment to international human rights obligations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified in 1995, and align with domestic priorities for social stability and economic advancement (World Health Organization, 2013). Historical contexts, such as post-Soviet transitions and ongoing regional conflicts, have shaped responses by highlighting vulnerabilities among displaced populations and reinforcing the need for gender-sensitive interventions. State efforts prioritize prevention,

protection, and rehabilitation, embedding gender equality into broader development agendas to mitigate physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence. Analytical examination reveals that effective implementation requires coordination among government bodies, civil society, and international partners, with measurable outcomes tied to increased reporting, enhanced support services, and cultural shifts. The framework's conceptual foundation rests on recognizing violence as a systemic issue intertwined with patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and conflict legacies, necessitating multifaceted strategies that promote empowerment and accountability.

Azerbaijan's strategy evolves through periodic assessments and adaptations, ensuring alignment with global standards while addressing local realities. For example, national action plans establish clear objectives, timelines, and indicators, facilitating targeted resource allocation. Institutional mechanisms provide operational support, while projects extend reach through awareness and capacity building. Evaluation processes underscore the importance of data-driven refinements, revealing progress in legal convictions and service utilization. Overall, the approach constructs a resilient system where women and girls access justice, security, and opportunities, contributing to national cohesion and sustainable growth.

Azerbaijan's legal structure forms the bedrock for combating violence against women and girls, comprising statutes that define violations, mandate protections, and enforce penalties. The Law on Guarantees of Gender Equality, enacted in 2006, stipulates equal rights in political, economic, and social domains, directly countering stereotypes that fuel discriminatory practices and violence. Provisions within the law require public institutions to integrate gender analyses into decision-making, establishing preventive measures against bias in education, employment, and family life.

The Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, adopted in 2010, categorizes violence into physical, psychological, economic, and sexual types, outlining procedures for victim support and perpetrator accountability. Courts issue protection orders under the law, including immediate restrictions on contact and long-term safeguards, with amendments to the Civil Procedure Code in 2011 expediting these processes for urgent cases. Constitutional articles, including Article 17 on family protection, Article 25 on equality, and Article 32 on personal integrity, underpin these laws, embedding anti-violence principles at the foundational level (Equality Now, Submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2024).

Alignment with international instruments strengthens the framework. Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women integrates global norms into national legislation, influencing reforms on harassment and exploitation. Although Azerbaijan has not ratified the Istanbul Convention, ongoing reviews incorporate its standards on prevention and victim support. Recent amendments to the Labor Code in 2022 and 2023 eliminate employment restrictions for women, reducing economic vulnerabilities that exacerbate violence. These changes, informed by gap analyses, enhance women's participation in sectors like construction and transport, fostering financial independence. Conviction rates for domestic violence have risen due to stricter penalties, demonstrating the legislation's deterrent effect. The legal system thus delivers both immediate remedies and long-term structural changes, ensuring comprehensive coverage of violence forms and promoting societal equity.

On February 10, 2026, the new draft law “On the Rights of the Child” was adopted in the first reading at the plenary session of the Milli Majlis. The draft was prepared by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues, and has a broader content than the existing law, covering 8 chapters and 63 articles. The new draft law defines the principle of the best interests of the child as the main legal mechanism, provides for the study of the child's opinion and assessment of possible negative impacts before decisions are made regarding the child. Various forms of violence are classified, early marriage is shown as a separate concept, and the protection, rehabilitation and legal guarantees of children exposed to violence or in difficult life conditions are regulated in more detail. The draft also aims to strengthen the protection of children's rights by more clearly establishing the child's freedom of thought and expression, the right to receive information, and direct participation in administrative and judicial proceedings.

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### **Qumral Zöhrab qızı Qədimzadə**

#### **Azərbaycanda qızların və qadınların müdafiə mexanizmləri və mövcud vəziyyəti**

**Xülasə:** 2015 – 2024 -cü illər ərzində Azərbaycanda qızların və qadınların zorakılıqdan qorunmasına yönəlmiş hərtərəfli hüquqi, institusional və siyasət çərçivəsi formalaşdırılmışdır. Qadınlara qarşı ayrı-seçkiliyin bütün formalarının ləğv edilməsi haqqında Konvensiya (CEDAW) kimi beynəlxalq standartlara uyğunlaşdırılmış milli tədbirlər gender əsaslı zorakılığın qarşısının alınması və ona cavab verilməsi məqsədilə qanunvericiliyi, institusional mexanizmləri, milli fəaliyyət planlarını və birgə layihələri özündə birləşdirir. Gender bərabərliyinin təminatları haqqında Qanun (2006) və Məişət zorakılığının qarşısının alınması haqqında Qanun (2010) daxil olmaqla qanunvericilik aktları hüquqi müdafiə təmin edir, Ailə, Qadın və Uşaq Problemləri üzrə Dövlət

Komitəsi kimi ixtisaslaşmış qurumlar isə dəstək mərkəzləri və monitoring mexanizmləri vasitəsilə bu çərçivələrin həyata keçirilməsini təmin edir.

**Açar sözlər:** gender əsaslı zorakılıq, müdafiə mexanizmləri, qadın hüquqları, qanunvericilik çərçivəsi, institusional dəstək, Azərbaycan

**Гумрал Гадимзаде Зохраб гызы**

**Механизмы защиты и текущее положение девушек и женщин в Азербайджане**

**Резюме:** В период 2015 – 2024 годов в Азербайджане была сформирована комплексная правовая, институциональная и политическая база, направленная на защиту девушек и женщин от насилия. Национальные меры, согласованные с международными стандартами, такими как Конвенция о ликвидации всех форм дискриминации в отношении женщин (CEDAW), объединяют законодательство, институциональные механизмы, национальные планы действий и совместные проекты для предотвращения гендерного насилия и реагирования на него. Законодательные акты, включая Закон о гарантиях гендерного равенства (2006) и Закон о предотвращении бытового насилия (2010), обеспечивают правовую защиту, а специализированные учреждения, такие как Государственный комитет по делам семьи, женщин и детей, реализуют эти механизмы через центры поддержки и инструменты мониторинга.

**Ключевые слова:** гендерное насилие, механизмы защиты, права женщин, законодательная база, институциональная поддержка, Азербайджан