



ISSUES RELATED TO THE RIGHTS OF AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YEZIDI GIRLS RESIDING IN ARMENIA





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Issues Related to the Rights of and Opportunities for Yezidi Girls Residing in Armenia/ Isabel Broyan, Parandzem Paryan, Hayastan Martirosyan, Eviya Hovhannisyan

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Research Context

When studying any society or ethnic community today, or when characterizing or defining them in any way, the researchers, from the very outset, try to define the identity of the community in question. That is, they try, based on the standards suggested by each community, such as: language, regional affiliation, self-naming and various cultural elements, to characterize ethnographic data of the community and its territorial coverage geographically. This is a very relevant issue in the case of the Kurds and Yezidis living in Armenia, for whom the political and scientific disputes on their identification and differentiation have a decades-long history. In the conditions of the primordialist approach prevalent in ethnology/ethnography in the Soviet Union and the ethnocentric policy implemented by the USSR toward national minorities, Yezidis were considered a religious minority within the Kurdish nation.¹ Starting from the national independence movement in 1988, when the Muslim Kurds predominantly left Armenia along with the other Muslim population residing in the country, calls were issued in different political fora for discussing and reconceptualizing the rights of the Yezidi nation.²

Till now, publicly available information about Yezidis is fragmented, because the Yezidi community continues to remain a closed one, given the absence of statehood and the ongoing threat of assimilation. As a consequence of erroneous interpretations of the Yezidi religion (for instance, that Yezidis are devil worshippers), this community has had to survive in a hostile environment, since historically “being a Yezidi meant to belong to a suppressed minority that had to conceal its religious beliefs and the customs deriving therefrom.”³

Historically, dialogue on the role of women in Yezidi society has become possible thanks to Western travelers and missionaries, as well as Soviet researchers who, in consideration of the USSR’s policy, would draw parallels on how the Yezidis lived in Armenia prior to and after the establishment of Soviet rule. Although the Yezidis were classified as a separate group in the early census documents of the Soviet Union, they were considered Kurds starting from 1930, due to the similarity in their languages.⁴ Thus, official Soviet documents noted the Yezidis as Kurds, or Yezidi Kurds. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Armenian Government began to distinguish between Yezidis and ethnic Kurds.

¹ Yezidis, in *Peoples of the World: Historical-Ethnographic Directory*, Editor in Chief Yu.V.Bromley, Moscow, “Soviet Encyclopedia”, 1988, p. 162 (in Russian)

² Ivanov, M., *Policy and the Public: Destiny of the Soviet Kurds* (Vostok, Orient), 2014, N-6, p. 62 (in Russian)

³ Ackermann A., *A Double Minority: Notes on the Emerging Yezidi Diaspora*, In *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*, edited by W. Kokot, K. Tölölyan and C. Alfonso, 156–169, London, Routledge, 2004.

⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Status Determination and Protection Information Section (DIPS). The Human Rights Situation of the Yezidi Minority in the Transcaucasus. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/485fa2342.pdf>. 2008. Accessed 15.11.2019. P. 9.

In this research paper, the term Yezidi is used only for the community that identifies itself in this way and distinguishes itself from Muslim Kurds, while the citations to articles from researchers in the Soviet period refer to both communities by the same name, as they are mentioned in the original text,

Goal, objectives and research methods

The main goal of this research is to identify the social and cultural issues currently existing in the Yezidi-populated communities of Armenia as a result of which the rights of Yezidi girls are being either restricted or violated. The following issues have been examined in the research:

- How is the role of a woman perceived in Yezidi society?
- What impact do early marriages and incomplete school education have on the role played by Yezidi women in social life?
- How are the rights of female Yezidi children violated and are any steps being taken by the state to prevent such violations?

The research was conducted from August to November 2019 in the Yezidi-populated communities of Ferik and Alagyaz in the Armavir and Aragatsotn marzes respectively. During the empirical stage of the research conducted in the mentioned villages as well as in Yerevan, the undertaken activities consisted of observations, in-depth and expert interviews as well as focus group discussions with the participation of community members, field specialists, anthropologists, RA Government representatives, and the employees of the police unit on juvenile cases. In total, the research included 17 in-depth interviews, 4 focus group discussions with school-aged boys and girls, as well as 6 expert interviews.

The academic literature pertinent to the topic in question and a number of archive documents were studied as well. The following sub-topics were identified for the analysis and classification of the research material:

1. The Yezidi religion and social structure of the community;
2. The role of Yezidi women in social life in the 19th century;
3. The role of Yezidi women in social life during the Soviet period;
4. The Yezidi/Kurdish community in the first years of the post-Soviet period;
5. Social and educational issues in the Yezidi-populated communities of post-Soviet Armenia;
6. The issue of early marriages in Yezidi communities;
7. Assessment of social issues and needs of the Yezidi community.

The Yezidi religion and social structure of the community

Yezidis are an ethnoreligious group whose religion is Yezidism. One of the unique characteristics of the Yezidi confession is that its followers are identified as belonging to the “Yezdikhana” (Ēzdīxāna) Yezidi

community. This very circumstance is what has enabled Yezidis to develop as a closed ethnoreligious group with faith as its most important constituent element. According to Yezidi religion, each Yezidi must be guided by the religious commandments that aim at preserving the purity of their religion.

Yezidism has historically been an oral religion whose traditions were transferred from generation to generation through the *kavls*, i.e. the holy Yezidi prayers.

The religion of Yezidis is closely linked to a caste system.⁵ Based on the principle of heredity, Yezidis belong to one of the following three castes: sheikhs (a spiritual caste), pirs (a spiritual caste) and murids (the laity). The sheikhs and pirs participate in the main ceremonies of the murids: births, weddings, and funerals. It is the duty of a sheikh to monitor observance of the canons of the Yezidi religion by the members of the community and to visit every house within his community. The duties of a pir include the interpretation and dissemination of the canons of Yezidi religion, as well as anointment of the murids.

Yezidism, as a religious system that also defines the social system of Yezidi community, is based on three core postulates: *Diza Dane* (dîza de'nê), *Darba Hirka* (derba xerqe) and *Shalbke Zerîn* (şelbikê zêrîn). The first translates as “container of paint” (Kurdish: *dîzik* - “container”, *dan* - “paint”), which symbolizes comingling, in this case – intermarriages, and prohibits Yezidis from marrying people of other faiths: “A Yezidi can only be born of a Yezidi father and Yezidi mother.” *Darba Hirka* literally means “strength of the woolen shirt” (this is a reference to the woolen shirt worn by dervishes, i.e. the strength of a spiritual person). *Darba Hirka* ensures the caste purity of the Yezidi community, clearly defines inter-caste relations and relations allowed within each caste. Moreover, this applies not only to the spiritual relations between and within castes, but also to the physical connections within a caste. The third postulate, *Shalbke Zerîn* (literally – “Golden Bowl”) is the central commandment of a Yezidi person. It is a call to follow the postulates of the religion, adhere to its customs, and refrain from converting. Combined, these postulates constitute what is called *Farze Bratiye*, i.e. “The Canon of the Spiritual Guidance” and define the social nature and order of a Yezidi community. Violation of these commandments is considered as apostasy and the offender is under threat of being ostracized from the community.⁶

The role of Yezidi women in social life in the 19th century

Back in the 19th century, many European travelers visiting the eastern parts of the Ottoman Empire mentioned Yezidi women in their writings. According to the notes of traveler Frederick Forbes, “Yezidi women, in contrast to Muslim women, do not conceal their faces. They were of attractive built, hair,

⁵ Avdoyev Teymuraz, *Historical-Theosophical Aspect of Yezidism*, Moscow, Era, 2011, p. 256 (in Russian)

⁶ Ibid, pages 285-286.

black eyes, and strong muscles... they occupied themselves with household tasks and interacted with the men as in European countries.” (Forbes, 1839, 427)⁷ Yezidi women mostly engaged in homemaking and animal husbandry. Forbes noted that Yezidi women were particularly focused on the tidiness of their houses.⁸

Layard Aysten Henry, another traveler and diplomat, wrote in his memoirs that Yezidi women would communicate openly with him: “As I sat beneath the trees, laughing girls gathered round me, examined my dress, or asked me of things to them strange and new. Some, more bold than the rest, would bring me the strings of beads, (...), whilst others ... stood at a distance, and weaved wild flowers into their hair.”⁹ However, according to the researcher Isya Joseph, “Yezidi women had to cover their faces with the folds of their dresses, when unknown men were looking at them.”¹⁰ It is possible that this was related to tribal customs linked to specific Yezidi settlements.

It is noteworthy that the women from families of emirs¹¹ historically had a voice when it came to the management of Yezidi communities, and in some cases, were even the actual leaders of their communities. For instance, the most renowned Yezidi female leader was Mayan Khatun (1873/1874–1957/1958) the mother of Emir Sa'id Beg (1900–1944) and wife of Ali Beg (1912). Mayan Khatun was the real leader of her community and was respected not only among Yezidis, but also outside the community.¹²

In the Ottoman Empire, Yezidis were prohibited for many years from gaining an education. It is unknown whether that restriction applied to education in general, or only to schools. According to a Yezidi storyteller, Yezidis would not go to Islamic schools, since they would have to study Islamic texts and the Koran there, and the danger of assimilation would thus be greater.¹³ Therefore, Yezidis preferred to gain an education at home, or to avoid it altogether.

It is worth noting the special role that Yezidi women had in conflict resolution. For example, Emerîkê Serdar, tells the story in her book *The Path of my Ancestors* of the residents of the village of Chlkani in the Ottoman Empire, particularly the Yezidi woman Belga, who single-handedly took revenge on her

⁷ Forbes Frederick, *A Visit to the Sinjâr Hills in 1838, with Some Account of the Sect of Yezidîs, and of Various Places in the Mesopotamian Desert, between the Rivers Tigris and Khâbûr*, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, vol. 9, p. 427.

⁸ Ibid, page 427.

⁹ Layard Aysten Henry, *Nineveh and Its Remains: With an Account of a Visit to the Chaldean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-worshippers; and an Enquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians*, London, “John Murray”, 1849, p. 295.

¹⁰ Joseph Isya, *Devil Worship: The Sacred Books and Traditions of the Yezidis*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, p. 99.

¹¹ The Yezidi leader on religious and educational matters bears the title of “mir”, i.e. “emir”.

¹² Guest John S., *Survival Among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis*, NY, “Routledge”, 2010, p. 191.

¹³ Allison Christine, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Richmond, “Curzon Press”, 2001, p. 47.

brother's murderer.¹⁴ It is worth a mention that vengeance for the murder was served not by a male member of the family but by a woman, which earned her the respect of the family. The story begins with the Yezidi adage "A lion is a lion, whether male or female" and talks about how a Yezidi woman is equal to a man to a certain extent.

Svetlana Bayloz wrote in an article that when two tribes fight on a battlefield, a woman could come out and cast her headscarf between them, which would definitely cause the clashes to cease.¹⁵ According to another tradition, if a woman distinguished herself through her intelligence or beauty, then her child would bear her name. At home, the woman had the right to participate in decisions, and a mother's approval was of particular importance for the marriage of her son or daughter. Bayloz also mentioned another figure from Yezidi history, Adela Khanum, who managed the whole region for a long time after her husband.

However, this freedom was relative. Sometimes, it was characterized by the dependence of the woman on the man. Women would suffer under the weight of these concerns. She was forced to run the household as well as participate in other work. Young women in particular were in a difficult position. They had to be the first in the house to awake, clean everything, serve everyone, and then sleep last of all. Sometimes, even a woman who already had grandchildren would not speak to her elder daughters and would not eat with the men.¹⁶

Thus, by living in a different religious and cultural environment, Yezidi women had become even more vulnerable when it came to participating in the social and political life of the country. Even though there are cases in history of Yezidi women that were the heads of their clans or occupied a special position in community life, their freedom was relative. And the causes for this were the style of their traditional life and the absence of an adequate education.

The role of Yezidi women in social life during the Soviet period

Yezidis came to the territory of modern Armenia at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as a result of forced deportation from the Ottoman Empire. It is noteworthy that the government of the Soviet Union considered language and not religion to be a sign of national identity.¹⁷ For this very reason, the word "Yezidi" disappeared from many official sources and documents. Although references were made to Yezidis in earlier Soviet demographic documents as a separate ethnic group, starting from

¹⁴ Serdar, Emerikê. *Wê şevê...* Yêrêvan: VMV Print. 2013.

¹⁵ Bayloz, Svetlana. "The Kurdish Woman Yesterday and Today". RA Archive *Ria Taza*, fund 1407, list 27, 1970 (in Russian)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Status Determination and Protection Information Section (DIPS), *The Human Rights Situation of the Yezidi Minority in the Transcaucasus*, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/485fa2342.pdf>. 2008. Accessed 15.11.2019.

the 1930s they were represented as part of a united Kurdish nation.¹⁸ According to ethnologist Chursin,¹⁹ early marriages were practiced among the Armenian Kurds prior to establishment of Soviet Rule: boys would marry at 15-16, and girls at 12-13 years of age. Moreover, these were cases of endogamy, i.e. the parties in the marriage were often blood relatives.

After the establishment of Soviet Rule, fundamental changes commenced in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the South Caucasus countries. Integration and adaptation to the socio-political system required new mechanisms. The particularly closed structure of the Yezidi community and its high religiosity were complicating the process of integration into the new system. For instance, ethnologist Tatyana Aristova mentioned that traditional Yezidi religious festivals seriously damaged the formation of a Soviet identity within the community, and that young Yezidi women often participated in such events. In her article published in the newspaper *Ria Taza*, Aristova recommended combating religious remnants, noting that “such a battle must take the form of expansive explanatory work.”²⁰ In her opinion, atheistic propaganda should be performed in a manner that would prevent believers from deviating from the USSR’s ideology.

It is worth noting that since 1923, according to information provided by the newspaper *Zarya Vostoka* published in Georgia, a number of scientific conferences and congresses of the Yezidi/Kurdish intelligentsia were convened in the South Caucasus region, where issues of social life, marriage, bride price, and blood revenge were discussed.²¹ For instance, in 1926, a Kurdish congress was convened in the Talin region with the participation of 28 delegates, of which 6 were Yezidis.²²

Hence, the elimination of illiteracy and remnants of tribal relations became one of the priority issues for the Soviet leadership. For instance, according to the newspaper *Ria Taza*, during the 1931-1932 academic year (July 5, 1932 – January 6, 1933), 228 of the 606 students in the Talin region were Yezidi/Kurdish girls, and out of 538 schoolchildren studying at 12 Kurdish/Yezidi schools in the Aparan region, 245 were girls.

Centers for eliminating illiteracy among adults were established throughout the country. According to the newspaper *Ria Taza*, centers for promoting literacy operated in almost all Yezidi/Kurdish villages: “142 women come from the Metz Javushlu (now Alagyaz), Mirak, Jarjaris, Karsansar villages of the Aparan region to gain literacy. (...) In 1933, members of the Komsomol were imparting literacy to 43

¹⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Status Determination and Protection Information Section (DIPS). *The Human Rights Situation of the Yezidi Minority in the Transcaucasus*. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/485fa2342.pdf>. 2008. Accessed 15.11.2019.

¹⁹ Chursin G.F., Filippovich L.A., *Geography of Trans-Caucasus*, Tiflis, 1929 (in Russian)

²⁰ Aristova T.F., *On the Issue of Religious Remnants in the Kurdish Families*, RA Archives “Ria Taza”, Collection 1407, List 27, 1961 [in Russian]

²¹ *Zarya Vostoka*, No. 1048, 1926

²² *Zarya Vostoka*, No 1048, 1926.

women and 40 men from the village Gyalto in the Talin region. (...) 52 persons gained an education in the village of Shamiram in the Ashtarak region.”²³

Aghasi Khanjyan, the First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party in the 1930s, was directly involved in the process of promoting education among the Yezidis/Kurds. In 1931, a specialized Kurdish pedagogical boarding school was opened in Yerevan, which played an important role in the training of Yezidi (Kurdish) teachers. Several years later, a two-year training course for Yezidi/Kurdish teachers commenced in Yerevan.²⁴

During the years of the USSR, considerable attention was paid to activating the social and cultural life of Yezidis/Kurds. In 1926, a film called *Zare* was short about the life of the Yezidis. The director of the film was Hamo Beknazaryan, a major Armenian cultural figure. Later, a traveling Kurdish theater was established, which gave a new lease of life to Yezidi communities. Yezidi women were also greatly involved in the activities of the theater. Notably, the theater toured across the whole USSR.

The USSR’s policies facilitated partial emancipation of Yezidi women. Yezidi women were given the opportunity to gain an education and participate in the activities of local councils on an equal footing with men. Since the 1960s, a Kurdish youth organization was operating in Armenia which called upon Yezidi/Kurdish women to actively participate in the social and political life of Soviet Armenia.²⁵ “While Kurdish women did not previously have the right to vote, now they can boldly take the stage and speak their mind. We have schools, libraries, Yezidi dance groups. Many of us obtain secondary and higher education, which was previously unavailable to Kurds,” a statement said.

In 1970, *Ria Taza* published an article by Svetlana Bayloz titled “The Kurdish Woman Yesterday and Today.” It noted that in the past, Kurdish women were forced to run the household and engage in housework. The author attached great importance to the active participation of Kurdish women in the social life of the country. “So, Msra Ali from the Djamushavan village of Aparan region is a Deputy of the Supreme Council of the ASSR, Atlas Suleymanova is the Delegate jointly representing the villages of Sharsharisa and Kurubohaza in the village council.” In the end, Bayloz pointed out that, in the Soviet Union, Kurdish women were getting professional education in pedagogy, medicine, engineering and other areas, which is of utmost importance for their participation in social life.

Thus, the policies of the USSR, which had the objective of eliminating the traditional approach to life, greatly facilitated the education of Yezidi women and their participation in the social and political life of the country.

²³ *Ria Taza*, 22 April, 5 July, and 19 July 1932 (in Russian)

²⁴ *Ria Taza*, 12 November 1937 (in Russian)

²⁵ Statement of the Kurdish Yuth Organization to the Kurdish Women, RA Archives, *Ria Taza*, 1960).

The Yezidi/Kurdish community in the first years of the post-Soviet period

For the Yezidis/Kurds of Armenia, the Soviet period represented a turning point in the study of their history and culture as well as the preservation of their identity, meaning their language, religion, and culture. The Yezidi/Kurdish minority was the largest national minority in Soviet Armenia. According to the 1926 census, 1.7% of the population of Armenia (15,262 people) constituted the Yezidis/Kurds, and this number had grown to 56,127²⁶ in 1989.

In 1988, parallel to the processes of Perestroika and reconceptualizing national and religious identity, a large Yezidi movement began in Armenia led by the representatives of the Yezidi community Aziz Amar, Kyaram Slon, Mahmud Tamoyan, and Hasan Hasanyan. Their objective was to get official government recognition for the Yezidis as a community separate from the Kurds.²⁷ As a result, at the Yezidi Assembly convened on September 30, the Yezidis managed to register as a separate minority for the 1989 USSR census.

Thus, 80% of the community that were previously considered to be Kurds now presented itself with the identity of Yezidi, with the intention to distinguish themselves from the Muslim Kurds. In order to reinstate their national and religious identity, the leaders of the Yezidi community, at the initiative of Sheikh Hasan, founded the first Yezidi school in Yerevan in 1990, and the first fortnightly newspaper was published in 1991 – *The Voice of the Yezidis (Dinge Yezdi)*. The Yezidi Religious Council was registered in the Religious Affairs Committee, which was subject to the RA Council of Ministers.²⁸ Meanwhile, the Kurds started publishing *Zagros*, the official newspaper of the Kurdish National Council of Armenia. Both *Zagros* and *Ria Taza* are still operational, thanks to the communities and the support of the RA Government.

Starting from the 1988 movement in Armenia, the hitherto good relations between the Muslim Kurds and the Armenians was subjected to some strain. More than 15,000 Muslim Kurds, some of whom had married Azerbaijanis living in Armenia, left Armenia as the NKR conflict escalated.²⁹

The most telling evidence of the ideological split between the Yezidis and Kurds in post-Soviet Armenia can be seen during the two simultaneous events organized in August 2007. Those who considered themselves Yezidis had organized a large gathering at Republic Square, protesting against the violence and murders of their coreligionists, the Yezidis Kurds, at the hands of the Muslim Kurds of Northern Iraq. At the same time, Armenian citizens that considered themselves Kurds had gathered not too far away, at Shahumyan Square, in solidarity with the Muslim Kurds of Iraq and in protest against military

²⁶ Evoyan L., Manukyan T., Religion as a Factor in Kurdish Identity Discourse in Armenia and Turkey, Religion and Soft Power in the South Caucasus, 2017, p. 157

²⁷ Abrahamian, J., The Yezidi Movement in Armenia, 1992, <http://groong.usc.edu/orig/ja-19980702.html>

²⁸ Asatryan G., Arakelova V., The Ethnic Minorities of Armenia, 2002, p. 12

²⁹ Abrahamian, J., *ibid.*, <http://groong.usc.edu/orig/ja-19980702.html>

aggression by Turkey. Those that considered themselves Kurds were seeking in this way to join the “Kurdish national movement” in Turkey and Iraq, interpreting this position as part of a vision to have their own state.³⁰ This example is the best demonstration of how the “choice of ethnic belonging” among the Yezidi-Kurd community of Armenia in the post-Soviet period was largely a matter of political viewpoints, sympathies and external influences. These factors had a considerable impact and caused changes in the socio-economic situation in the Yezidi-Kurdish community.

Social and educational issues in the Yezidi-populated communities of post-Soviet Armenia

The Yezidi community is the largest ethnoreligious minority in Armenia. The Yezidis live mainly in the Armavir, Aragatsotn, Ararat, Kotayk, Shirak and Lori regions, with a total population of around 35,000-40,000.³¹

This document presents the results of the research conducted in the Yezidi-populated villages of Ferik, Armavir region³² and Alagyaz, Aragatsotn region,³³ which express the current issues faced by the Yezidi community of Armenia in general.

Based on the social and cultural situation described above, we have considered problems existing in the Armenian Yezidi community from different perspectives: gender, legal, social and cultural.

In order to understand the social needs of Yezidi women, the analysis was performed as per the following points:

- Accessibility of medical centers;
- Accessibility of kindergartens;
- Educational issues;
- Availability of jobs.

Accessibility of medical centers

The 1988 earthquake destroyed the whole infrastructure of Alagyaz village. The kindergarten, school, factory, and polyclinic were all left in ruins. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the factory in

³⁰ Dalalyan T., Identification processes among the Kurmanji-speaking populations of Armenia, Henrich Böll Stiftung, Tbilisi, 2008, URL: <https://ge.boell.org/index.php/en/2008/09/10/identifikacionnye-processy-sredi-kurmandzhiyazychnogo-naseleniya-armenii> [in Russian]

³¹ RA Statistical Committee, 2011 census results, <https://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99478358.pdf>

³² The population of the Yezidi community in the Armavir region – 441, Official website of the Armavir Marzpetaran, <http://armavir.mtad.am/community-leader-council/261/>

³³ The Alagyaz consolidated community includes the villages of Alagyaz, Kaniashir, Charchkis, Mijnatun, Mirak, Shenkani, Jamushlu, Ria Taza, Sadunts, and Sipan, population – 5828 Official website of the Aragatsotn Marzpetaran, <http://aragatsotn.mtad.am/about-communities/806/>

Alagyaz ceased its operations, and the villagers, including women, lost their jobs. Only the school building has been restored since the year of Armenia's independence.

Currently, like in a number of other communities of Armenia, Ferik and Alagyaz villages do not have any medical centers whatsoever. There is a medical station providing first aid at the school of Ferik village, but the medical officer covers several villages and is not always present there. According to the principal of the school, the nurse lives in the neighboring village, and in a case of an accident, people call and ask her to come. Moreover, the residents of the community mentioned that in case of any health problems, they prefer to seek medical assistance in the medical centers of Ejmiatsin city.

The situation in Alagyaz village is the same. In case of health issues, community residents have to go to the neighboring village, or to the cities of Aparan or Yerevan.

Accessibility of kindergartens

Neither of the mentioned communities have kindergartens, which greatly complicates the issue of possible employment for women. During the interviews, one of the women from Ferik complained that she could not work in the field because she had nobody to care for her child. There is a kindergarten in the neighboring village, but due to poor transport services between the communities and an unsuitable timetable, she cannot avail of its availability and take her child there. As for Alagyaz, there is also another issue there. One of the parents noted in his response: *“My kids used to go to the kindergarten in the neighboring village, but that is a Christian kindergarten, and they try to plant seeds of Christianity in the children in any way they can, like events and holidays, but our religious confession is different. In any case, my kids would participate in various events there and learn Armenian poems...”* (Field Demographic Materials, hereinafter - FDM, Alagyaz village, housewife, 40).

The lack of preschool education institutions is a major issue in Yezidi communities, since those Yezidi children that do not go to kindergarten end up facing the problem of inadequate Armenian fluency in the first grade of school. The fact that the children communicate within their families in the Yezidi/Kurdish language and do not learn Armenian impedes their chances of getting a quality education in Armenian.

Educational issues

The Yezidi community faces several issues today, and the most significant of these is education. It is mandatory in Armenia to complete a 12-year school education, after completing basic education in grade 9, children are expected to go to a high school for grades 10 through 12 or continue their education in a training institution. But the situation is different in the Yezidi community.

Nowadays, the children of Ferik community face such educational problems as incomplete secondary education (not completing one's studies after grade 9) and, as a result of that, almost a complete absence of any aspiration to gain a higher education. Moreover, due to the small number of pupils in the school

of Ferik community, classes combine children from several grades, which further complicates the education process, because the teachers have to use the same class time to deliver material from different textbooks to children from both these grades. This greatly impedes full participation of children in the educational program, and children lose any interest toward the education process.

Currently, there are 46 pupils studying at the school of Ferik community, of whom 28 are boys. As revealed from the focus group discussions with the pupils from grades 8 and 9, the children attach importance to continuing their education and some of them have already decided on their future professions, but after grade 9 they face the following challenges in terms of continuing their studies:

- The Ferik school is at the level of basic education. In order to continue their studies at a high school, the Yezidi children need to go to the Armenian schools in the neighboring communities of Arshaluys or Haytagh;
- Transportation problems: the timetable of the Ferik village bus does not match the timetable of the high school, which makes it difficult to go to school in the next village;
- In order to successfully take the integrated exams to gain admission to higher educational institutions, some pupils attend private classes with tutors outside of school. Since the majority of those who teach in the Ferik village reside in another community, the schoolchildren have to travel to the city (mostly, to Ejmiatsin) or to neighboring villages.
- The practice of kidnapping girls remains alive. In the Ferik community, there is still a problem that school-age girls could be kidnapped as they make their way between home and school.

In spite of the high aspiration of the pupils to continue education in the vocational colleges and higher educational institutions, the lack of jobs in the village greatly affects the motivation of the children to continue studying. Currently, there are not even any extracurricular activity groups in the community. Previously, in the neighboring Haytagh community, there were sports and fine arts groups, which to some extent encouraged the aspirations of the pupils towards education. The parents of the children also spoke of the positive influence of these groups. They mentioned that there used to be a woman teaching at the village school for several years who used a unique approach that had managed to trigger interest and an active cultural life amongst school-age children, but all that “faded away” again after her departure. The Ferik school does not have even a proper gym for physical education classes. The only place where children can play is the small soccer field adjacent to the school.

In contrast to the children’s claim that they would definitely continue their education if a high school were opened in the village, the principal of the village school believes that the children have no love for education. *“A person who wants to continue his or her education will overcome these hardships and find a way to continue their education, if there is indeed internal motivation to do that”*, L.P. asserted (FDM, Ferik village, L.P. – school principal). This depth of this problem is placed into perspective with

the inconsistent attitudes of the parents, some of whom claim: *“If I tutor the kids, who is going to do the field work? I barely manage to do the village work, educating is the job of the school,”* (FDM, Ferik village, C. – housekeeper, around 35).

There is a lot of dissonance on the issue of education among different families, parents and the school faculty, even to the point that, in 2018, some of the parents dissatisfied with the principal of the school arranged a protest in the schoolyard (Balasanyan, 2018). Many of concerned Yezidi women of the community raised their voice in protest during the very first days of the academic year, aiming to improve the quality of education at the school. However, they faced the severe reprehension and criticism of some other male and female village residents, the school faculty and even their own relatives. They were accused of organizing a protest that had been orchestrated by certain individuals pursuing their own political interests and trying to instigate unrest within the community. Notably, the active participation by women in the protest was labeled by other women of the community as *“shameful behavior and immoral action”* (FDM, Ferik village, M., a parent), whereas the men did not participate in the initiative at all. It should be emphasized here that the women seeking to resolve the educational issues within the community had, prior to their marriage, lived and studied in Armenian communities, completed their secondary education and considered the quality education of their children to be important.

The situation is different in the Alagyaz village of Aragatsotn region. Alagyaz is known as a Kurdish intellectual center, and has brought forth many scientists and academics, a fact that was asserted by almost every community resident. The twelve-year basic school in Alagyaz currently has 96 pupils. This is the only secondary school in the area that provides a twelve-year education and the majority of Yezidi children from the neighboring communities also frequent it.

Due to the fact that the village was the center of the Yezidi/Kurdish social and cultural life during the Soviet period, and is located on a busy inter-state road, the attitude toward education, work, and the social roles of men and women here differs considerably from that in the Ferik community.

The mayor of Alagyaz community, J.M., mentioned during the interview that several activities had been carried out at the Alagyaz school within recent years, enhancing the aspiration of the pupils for education. *“The school implements an annual program called ‘Teacher of the Year and Pupil of the Year’, the winners of which receive bonus payments for their performance as a student or for diligent performance of teaching duties”* (FDM, Alagyaz village, J.M., community mayor).

As for improving the quality of education, the Alagyaz school principal mentioned that back when a twelve-year education was not mandatory, some children would stop studying after grade 9 either because they got married or simply due to the lack of a desire to study. *“It should be noted that getting at least a twelve-year education is given high importance in Alagyaz now. We should also acknowledge that very few Yezidi children continue their education in higher educational institutions – the boys go to*

military service as soon as they finish school, and the girls either get married or simply do not continue studying for one reason or another” (FDM, Alagyaz village, R.M., school principal).

In Alagyaz, like in Ferik, the lack of extracurricular activity groups also considerably affects the level of educational development of school-aged children. Without anything else to occupy them, the children start and end their days with classes and housework only. There is only a karate group in the village, attended exclusively by the boys of the community. During the focus group discussions, the girls expressed their desire to also have dancing, singing and painting groups in Alagyaz community. The girls also spoke of the importance of non-formal classes on career orientation that would eventually help them choose a profession. Grade 11 and 12 students spoke very enthusiastically about going to university immediately after finishing school and gaining professional skills. One of the girls studying in grade 12 of the Alagyaz school noted: *“In our family we endorse education, but this is not part of our traditions. My grandfather and I have decided that, after graduating from grade 12, I will gain admission to the Yerevan State Conservatory named after Komitas, but we do not have relatives in Yerevan, and there is the issue of finding a place to stay. I want to become a famous singer, to work and to invest the money I earn into the development of my community” (FDM, Alagyaz village, L., pupil, 18).*

Availability of jobs

Unemployment in Armenia continues to be one of the most salient issues facing every RA citizen looking for a job. The lack of jobs is a particularly acute problem in the regions, and the Yezidi communities have not managed to avoid it either. In the Ferik community, employment opportunities are limited to the school, village administration and animal husbandry. All the administrative and education positions in Ferik are occupied by men or Armenian women. In general, there is a shortage of Yezidi language teachers in the Yezidi communities while those that teach the language often do not have the corresponding qualifications. Yezidi women are mostly engaged in household work and their family agricultural activities such as milk or cheese production, and so on. Hence, the participation of Yezidi women in the economic, social and cultural life of the village is very limited.

The only Yezidi girl in grade 9 of the Ferik school confessed: *“After completing my basic school education, I want to train as a hairdresser, but I don’t want to work in Ferik, because the conditions in the village don’t help a person develop” (FDM, Ferik village, S. – female pupil, 15).*

In Alagyaz community also, employment is limited to the above mentioned areas with one difference – the level of female engagement, in contrast to the women of Ferik, is considerably greater. During an interview, one of the female residents of Alagyaz mentioned: *“My daughter-in-law works in the school cafeteria as part of the United Nations Sustainable School Meals program; my son is a teacher, and my sister-in-law works at the school as a janitor” (FDM, Alagyaz village, a housekeeper, 65).*

Thus, the lack of proper infrastructure and opportunities facilitating self-actualization and development of cultural life result in a situation where Yezidi women are less and less involved in different aspects of social life within the community.

The issue of early marriages in the Yezidi communities

The practice of early marriages of girls continues to be widespread in the Yezidi-populated communities of Armenia, which was noted also in the 2016 Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.³⁴

Armenia has undertaken a number of international commitments in relation to the issue of early marriages of girls. Among the most important instruments ratified by Armenia are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1993) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1993), which obliges the member states to ensure free and full consent of the parties to the marriage. Moreover, according to Article 5 of the same Convention, the States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. Besides that, according to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Armenia has undertaken an obligation to eliminate early and forced marriages of children by 2030.

According to the RA Family Code, “The mutual voluntary consent of a man and a woman and their attaining of the marital age of 18 are necessary for confirmation of marriage.” Back in 2012, when the Draft Law was being discussed, certain complaints were raised among some of the representatives of the Yezidi community. Taking these viewpoints into account, the RA Government reconsidered its decision and supplemented the Draft with a provision to the effect that a person can marry at the age of 17, given the consent of his or her parents, foster parents or a guardian, as well as at the age of 16, given the consent of his or her parents, foster parents or a guardian and provided that the other party in the marriage is at least 18 years old. Despite this concession, there is no operational procedure in the state bodies that would allow monitoring on whether marriages are forced or not. Besides that, non-registered marriages are also common practice, which complicates the supervision process even more.

In the UN Universal Periodic Review 2015 Report, Armenia agreed to consider the recommendations on setting a mandatory minimum marital age required by the law and on developing awareness programs on the negative impact of child marriage. Despite this, we have been informed from the Division on National Minorities and Religious Affairs of the RA Government that no such awareness or prevention programs have been envisaged so far.

³⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Armenia*, /C/ARM/CO/5-6, 25.11.2016, p. 14.

In addition to the above mentioned factors, such as inaccessibility of education and lack of infrastructure, gender-based perceptions and norms as well as the socio-economic reasons discussed below also facilitate the continuity of the practice of early marriages of girls in Yezidi communities and their dropout from the education system.

Taboos of marital culture: intermarriages

Traditionally, the fundamental principle of marriage in the Yezidi culture centers around the prohibition of unions with people of different religions and castes. These restrictions are still highly significant and strictly observed in many Yezidi communities.

Within the context of the Yezidi social system, which is founded on institutionalized relationships between strictly-defined groups, proper conduct of caste roles is considered one of the important provisions of Yezidi identity.³⁵ As already mentioned, one of the specific characteristics of the Yezidi caste system is caste endogamy – marriage between representatives of the spiritual class—the sheikhs and pirs—and representatives of the laity—the murids—is one of the principal religious taboos.³⁶ During the field research, some of the respondents considered mixed marriages or sexual relations between castes as blasphemy or a sin, and a couple belonging to the sheikh caste mentioned during the interview that a person violating this principle ceases to be a Yezidi, and in order to emphasize the cultural unacceptability of intermarriage between castes, they compared it to having sexual intercourse with one's own mother or sister.

Nonetheless, just like the differences both in the socio-economic and education aspects of life in the observed two communities, namely – in Ferik village of the Ararat region and Alagyaz village of Armavir region, there is also some variation regarding the institution of marriage and the application of the above mentioned principles. For instance, while caste divisions preserved their significance in the case of marriage to this day in Ferik, this restriction was not considered as important among the interviewees in Alagyaz.

The principle of endogamy applies also outside the caste, in the case of marriage with other communities. Some respondents explained this restriction on inter-community marriage through the necessity of preserving both the national identity and religion. As asserted by one of the respondents, since a person can only be a Yezidi if he or she is born of a Yezidi mother and a Yezidi father, married outside the community means a loss of this identity. Despite the religious ban, there is no lack of stories featuring mixed marriages, but in all these cases the outsider was the woman. For instance, in Alagyaz village, the father of a boy who had married an Armenian girl said that he would not have allowed his daughter to marry an Armenian boy. In the same manner, one of the women in Ferik village noted that

³⁵ Kreyenbroek Phillip, Khanna Omarkhali, *Introduction to the special issue: Yezidism and Yezidi studies in the early 21st century*, 2014.

³⁶ Domle K., *Yazidis: A Deep-Rooted Community in an Unstable Present*. In Salloum, S. Minorities, 2013.

“The boys do marry people with other national identities, but if a girl does this, everybody will categorically oppose it, there will be a war” (FDM, Ferik village, a housekeeper, 30).

This application of the principle of double endogamy, i.e. restriction to a partner with the religious and caste identity, makes it difficult for representatives of the Yezidi community, which counts more than 35,000 persons in Armenia, to find appropriate partners. This problem is especially acute for the smaller castes, for instance, the pirs. According to Sheikh Hasan Tamoyan, it is also due to such a lack of alternatives that there are often cases of marriages between close relatives in the Yezidi community. On the other hand, the field research has revealed cases of marriage with representatives of other national groups or castes, and this can be a result of circumventing religious bans due to the small number of Yezidi girls, or, in some cases, of weakly expressed religious identity.

The issue of sex ratio imbalance

One of the factors indirectly furthering early marriages of Yezidi girls is the sex ratio imbalance caused by the practice of sex-selective abortion. Since independence, a continuous increase has been registered in the sex ratio imbalance of births in Armenia: according to research conducted by the United Nations Population Fund from June 2012 to January 2013, there were 114-115 male births for every 100 female births while, among national minorities, the prevalence of male births is even higher, around 128 male births per 100 female births.³⁷

Thus, although the problem of sex ratio imbalance exists across Armenia, it is much more acute in the small and closed Yezidi community. As we have already mentioned, as a closed ethnoreligious group, marriage among Yezidis is allowed within the community only. Therefore, because of the small female population on the one hand, and the principle of double endogamy on the other, “competition” for a bride starts at an early age by making advance agreements between families for future marriages, through formal engagement or kidnapping of girls.

Physical and psychological security: fear of kidnapping

The danger of being kidnapped directly affects the quality of the lives of the girls, as well as the decisions and choices made by their families. In particular, the fear of kidnapping, first of all, leads to a need to monitor movement of the girls and their presence in public spaces. The inability of girls to continue their education is also partly caused not just by poor infrastructure, but also by the fact that neither the parents nor their daughters feel safe. As mentioned earlier, there is no high school in Ferik, and therefore students must often attend the schools of the neighboring villages or Ejmiatsin city in order to continue their education. That poses a huge problem for girls, and due to the danger of girl kidnapping practiced in the community, parents do not allow their daughters to travel alone to any other community. High school-aged girls are not only prohibited from going outside the village by

³⁷ Guilamoto Z.C, IRD/CEPED Paris, *Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis*, Yerevan, 2013, p. 77

themselves, they also often move short distances only in the company of their relatives. For example, in Alagyaz village, a female eighth-grader came to the interview from the neighboring house accompanied by her brother, and left with him. As a result of the fear of kidnapping and social barriers against solitary movements, girls are often unable to continue their education outside the village.

During one of the focus group discussions held in Alagyaz, several participants simultaneously mentioned the birthday party of a 14-year-old Yezidi girl, to which all her classmates had been invited. Everybody showed up, except for one girl that had not been allowed by her father and brother, who feared that she might be kidnapped. This problem is topical in the village, and when asked about how girls go to school in this context, some participants answered that their brothers or parents accompany them if the school is located far from their house.

The fear of kidnapping also often motivates the families of young girls to marry them off at an early age, since this allows them to choose the future family and the groom for their daughter. For instance, a woman from Alagyaz village whose granddaughter married in Russia at the age of 14, mentioned that she did not have any other option but to marry her off: *“At least we knew to whom we were giving her hand in marriage”* (FDM, Alagyaz village, a housekeeper, around 55).

A middle-aged woman, when referring to this topic, told us that she ended her education and got married at an early age because she could not go to the neighboring village alone: *“I did not have the opportunity to go with anybody else to the neighboring community to study, and my parents did not let me go alone. Immediately after graduating from school, I got married. My parents were thinking: What would happen if a boy from a bad family kidnaps me?”* (FDM, Alagyaz village, a housekeeper, around 40).

At the Ejmiatsin Police Unit for juvenile cases, one of the police officers mentioned that the problem of early marriages is common in Yezidi community. It was noted that the police does not have any mechanisms to allow the children to continue their education if their parents had withdrawn them from the school. *“The case is processed as usual, but sometimes the school principals themselves tell us that this is a Yezidi tradition and urge us to concede”* (FDM, city of Ejmiatsin, operative on juvenile cases).

Gender norms and practices

The gender perceptions and norms, the virtues and the values traditionally associated with “femininity” further facilitate early marriages and serve as a basis for the development of daily interpersonal practices and male-female relationships within the community.

The “son bias”³⁸ in Yezidi families, i.e. the differentiated treatment of male and female children, is reflected not only in the sex-selective abortion statistics, but also in everyday practices. For instance, one of the respondents, when speaking about the role of a girl in the family, noted that *“the girl is a guest,*

³⁸ It reflects the explicit priority shown toward boys in society, leading to acute discrimination against girls and women.

and the guest comes from God” (FDM, Yerevan, H.T., around 65). Although this remark was made in order to emphasize that the birth of a girl is a blessing bestowed upon the family, the status of “a guest” clearly differs from that of the heir, enjoyed by the male child. The virtues and values appreciated in children of different sexes are also different. When speaking of the girls, the main characteristics referred to during the focus group discussions and interviews were “*obedience, humbleness and modesty.*” The most valued virtues for girls, “*purity and virginity*”, are directly connected to the honor of the girl and that of the family. These values transform into the accepted norms and patterns of behavior: since girls have to avoid situations where doubts may be raised about their proper behavior, their freedom of movement in the public space must be restrained. In particular, ensuring the safety of girls and the preservation of her “good reputation” prior to her marriage constitute important functions in the family, while the other functions, such as providing for education, are less important.

The practices of maturation differ drastically among boys and girls as well. In the case of boys, maturation is expressed through their gradual independence; while they have more opportunities to travel to another city or abroad to study or work, in the case of girls it is usually the opposite. The transition of girls from childhood to a mature age, which usually coincides with physical maturity and also another important social event—graduation from school—manifests in the form of seclusion. The day-to-day lives of girls is mainly limited to doing housework – on the one hand, this is to ensure their security and protection from the danger of kidnapping and, on the other hand, in order to be consistent with the existing gender-based roles. Moreover, at the age of 13 or 14, girls already have access to the attributes of the mature women such as makeup, high heels, etc. As one of the respondents said: “*Once, my 14-year-old cousin, with whom we are of the same age, visited us wearing makeup and high heels. I asked her, What’s going on? She said, I am already allowed to do this. But just yesterday we had been playing together with dolls*” (FDM, Yerevan, Z.K., around 25).

Another important issue is communication with the opposite sex. The field research has revealed that, although playing games and being friends in mixed groups of boys and girls is considered to be normal at school age, starting from the period of “seclusion”, communication between girls and boys that are not relatives becomes strictly limited in traditional families. For this reason, meeting someone of the opposite sex is something that occurs either during family gatherings and events, such as weddings, or through “matchmaker” relatives and acquaintances. In this regard, a special role is played by persons who belong to the sheikh caste, who, knowing the members of their communities and being in regular contact with them, often act as intermediaries in the process of finding a candidate. Although almost every respondent asserted that “*Forced marriages are no longer practiced*” or “*Girls don’t have to marry if they don’t want to*”, the close supervision of communication with the opposite sex clearly limits the opportunities of girls to freely find a partner.

Summary

Thus, before the Soviet period, the role of Yezidi women and their social opportunities were limited by factors intrinsic to a patriarchal society and life within an insecure ethnic environment. Although the policies of the Soviet Union fostered a certain emancipation among Yezidi women, and the latter were given an opportunity to gain an education, work and participate in the local cultural and political life on an equal footing with men, the restrictions on social mobility and practices of early marriages continued to remain in place during the post-independence years as well.

Today, one of the main problems facing Yezidi girls is the low level of utilization of their right to education: due to the language barrier, underdeveloped transportation infrastructure and lack of guarantees of security, the opportunities for continuing basic education often remain unavailable for girls residing in rural communities. Besides this. The lack of kindergartens and jobs in rural communities is another factor that maintains the socio-economic dependency of women.

Additionally, the practice of early marriages still maintains a presence in Yezidi communities, caused on the one hand by the cultural perceptions of marriage and the distribution of gender roles and, on the other hand, by the very narrow circle of potential partners for marriage due to sex-selective abortions and double (ethnic and caste-based) endogamy as well as the absence of any state policy in this area.

Although there is a clearly-defined problem in Armenia that Yezidi women are highly vulnerable from the perspective of early marriages and incomplete education, the state does not have any appropriate prevention programs. There are no developed mechanisms or educational programs that are aimed at increasing the awareness among Yezidi women about their rights.

Assessment of social issues and needs

- School classes in Yezidi communities combine children of different grades, which impairs the delivery of a quality education to children of different ages studying together.
- The lack of a pre-school or kindergarten in both communities impairs the smooth transition of first-graders into the learning process conducted in Armenian. The lack of a kindergarten is also an obstacle due to which Yezidi/Kurdish women are unable to go to work and usually undertake the upbringing of their children.
- The majority of teachers working at Yezidi/Kurdish schools are Armenians, which is also problematic in terms of properly organizing the learning process. Armenian teachers and their Yezidi/Kurdish pupils do not always understand each other. The children's motivation to study gradually fades as a result of this. For the same reason, Armenian teachers are not always motivated to provide quality knowledge to Yezidi/Kurdish pupils.
- The small number of pupils and often the lack of friends of the same age are also problems for Yezidi/Kurdish children. It became clear after a number of interviews that children refuse to participate in various activity groups because they have no friends there. School-aged girls and young women mentioned that they did not have friends, meaning that their social environment was narrowed down solely to their circle of family and relatives.
- The school in Ferik village considerably differed from the school of Alagyaz community in terms of its poor facilities, lack of a gym and laboratory rooms for Chemistry and Physics.
- The inconsistent attitudes of parents was another problem as a result of which children often did not gain a quality education.
- The lack of specialist teachers and involvement in the educational process of other specialists in their place also affected the general quality of education.
- The lack of a high school in Ferik community was one another important obstacle impeding a quality education. Despite the fact that RA legislation considers a complete secondary education to be mandatory, law enforcement bodies often turn a blind eye to education-related and other social problems existing in areas populated by national minorities.
- Transportation services in the communities are inefficient. In order to reach the neighboring village which has a high school, children need to use a minivan, the timetable of which does not match the timing of classes at the high school.

- Children in villages are occupied only by attending school and sometimes helping their parents with field work. There are no extracurricular activity groups in the communities, and, as a result the children's interest toward educational processes gradually decreases.
- Both communities lack medical facilities, and consequently, the local population—especially, the women—have to go to the medical institutions in neighboring communities, which are not always financially or physically accessible to them.
- Due to the lack of jobs, which is characteristic not only of the Yezidi/Kurdish communities but the whole of Armenia, the education system as such is not given much importance.
- There are no state educational programs that would be implemented among the Yezidi women to increase their awareness of their rights, there are no effective mechanisms guaranteeing the right of Yezidi girls to education, as well as no clear policy to combat girl kidnapping.

ABSTRACT

Yezidis are the largest national minority in Armenia, and are considered a closed community. As a distinct ethnoreligious group, Yezidis in Armenia preserve their national identity and faith. However, the situation of the rights of Yezidi girls and women in Armenia is of concern. This study attempts to present the top priority needs of Yezidi girls in Armenia, the extent to which Yezidi girls are vulnerable to early marriages, and their role in decision-making processes regarding their own lives, which may form the basis for further discussions and solutions.

As the desk and field study results show, Yezidi girls and women are vulnerable to deprivation, particularly of their educational, social and cultural rights. As a result of the Yezidis' specific social structure, the socio-economic situation in the regions of Armenia and lack of security, early marriages are extensively practiced. Although Armenia has obligations to protect the rights of national minorities and eliminate harmful practices, Yezidi girls do not fully enjoy their rights, not only because of cultural and social issues, but also because of the omissions of the legal system.

Սեղմագիր

Եզդիները Հայաստանի ամենամեծ ազգային փոքրամասնությունն են, որոնք համարվում են փակ համայնք: Իբրև էթնիկ-կրոնական առանձին խումբ, եզդիները Հայաստանում պահպանում են ազգային ինքնությունն ու հավատը: Այնուամենայնիվ, եզդի աղջիկների և կանանց իրավունքների հետ կապված վիճակը Հայաստանում մտահոգիչ է: Սույն հետազոտությամբ փորձ է արվում ներկայացնել Հայաստանում եզդի աղջիկների առավել գերակա պահանջումները, այն թե որքանով են եզդի աղջիկները խոցելի վաղ ամուսնությունների հանդեպ և նրանց դերը սեփական կյանքին առնչվող որոշումների կայացման ընթացքում, որպիսի հարցերը կարող են հիմք ծառայել հետագա քննարկումների և լուծումների համար:

Գրասենյակային և դաշտային ուսումնասիրությունների արդյունքների համաձայն, եզդի աղջիկներն ու կանայք խոցելի են իրենց իրավունքներից, հատկապես՝ կրթական, սոցիալական և մշակութային իրավունքներից զրկվելու նկատմամբ: Եզդիների յուրահատուկ սոցիալական կառուցվածքի, Հայաստանի տարածաշրջանների սոցիալ-տնտեսական վիճակի և անվտանգության պակասի բերումով, վաղ ամուսնությունները լայն տարածում ունեն: Չնայած Հայաստանը պարտավորություններ ունի ազգային փոքրամասնությունների իրավունքները պաշտպանելու և վնասակար երևույթները վերացնելու ուղղությամբ, եզդի աղջիկներն լիարժեքորեն չեն օգտվում իրենց իրավունքներից՝ ոչ միայն մշակութային կամ սոցիալական խնդիրների, այլ նաև իրավական համակարգում առկա բացերի պատճառով:

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**ԵՎՐԱՍԻԱ
ՆԱՄԱԳՈՐԾՆԱԿՑՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ
ԷԻՄՆԱԴՐԱՄ**



Հետազոտությունն իրականացվել է Հայաստանում եզրի աղջիկների հանրային մասնակցության խթանմանն ուղղված նախագծի շրջանակում, որի նպատակն է ավելի խորը պատկերացում կազմել Հայաստանում բնակվող եզրի աղջիկների իրավունքներին և հնարավորություններին առնչվող խնդիրների վերաբերյալ:

Այս հրապարակումը պատրաստվել է Հայաստանում Բուլղարիայի Հանրապետության դեսպանության ֆինանսական աջակցությամբ: Բովանդակության համար պատասխանատվություն է կրում Եվրասիա համագործակցություն հիմնադրամը և կարող է չարտահայտել Հայաստանում Բուլղարիայի Հանրապետության դեսպանության տեսակետները:

Հայաստանում բնակվող ազգությամբ եզրի աղջիկների իրավունքներին և հնարավորություններին առնչվող խնդիրները/ Իսաբել Բրոյան Մխախի, Փառանձեմ Փարյան, Հայաստան Մարտիրոսյան, Էվիյա Հովհաննիսյան

Խմբագիրներ՝

Նիկոլայ Հովհաննիսյան
Անահիտ Խաչատրյան
Ազնիվ Նասյան

Եվրասիա համագործակցություն հիմնադրամ, 2020 թ., էջ 31



Սույն հոդվածների ժողովածուն մաս է կազմում «ԵՀՀ համալսարան» խորագրի ներքո հրապարակվող ձեռնարկների շարքի՝ Կրթություն, պատմության մեթոդաբանություն, մշակույթ և արժեքներ (ԿՊՄՄԱ) թեմայով: Շարքն ընդգրկում է գրույցներ չորս ծավալուն թեմաների վերաբերյալ.

- Քննադատական մտածողություն (ՔՄ)
- Պատերազմ և խաղաղություն (ՊԽ)
- Քաղաքացիական հասարակություն (ՔՀ)
- **Կրթություն, պատմության մեթոդաբանություն, մշակույթ և արժեքներ (ԿՊՄՄԱ)**