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Armenia: State protection available for women who are victims of violence

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Violence against women within the family unit is reportedly common in Armenia (UN 27 Feb. 2003, Para. 1877; Ishkanian Spring 2003, 17; MAHR Dec. 2000, 6); however, there is little data to support this assertion and social awareness of the problem remains fairly low (UN 27 Feb. 2003, Para. 1877). Various estimates report between 7.8 and 45 per cent of women face violence at home (*Armenia Now* 12 Dec. 2003; *ibid.* 13 Sept. 2002; USAID 2003; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 3). In addition, Armenia is a source country for human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation (UN 27 Feb. 2003, Para. 1881; IOM Sept. 2001, 22-23; IWPR 15 Jan. 2004).

Current Legislation on Violence Against Women

The Armenian Criminal Code does not specifically criminalize domestic violence, sexual harassment or marital rape (UN 27 Feb. 2003, Para. 1871-1872, 1878; USAID 2003; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 3). Crimes that would otherwise fall into the aforementioned categories are tried under different sections of the law such as rape, assault and battery, illicit seizure of travel documents, pimping, prostitution and pandering, fraudulent marriage for "mercenary ends," extortion and coerced sexual intercourse (UN 27 Feb. 2003, Para. 1871, 1872, 1876; see also IOM Sept. 2001, 34). When individuals are charged with offences related to domestic altercations, the UN cites a report claiming the punishment is either a fine or 15-days imprisonment (27 Feb. 2003, Para. 1877). According to the UN, as a result of "traditional notions of marriage and of men as superior" marital rape occurs with impunity (*ibid.* Para. 1878).

A recent report by the Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPR) noted that Article 132 of the Armenian Criminal Code outlaws trafficking and proscribes penalties of between one and eight years imprisonment (15 Jan. 2004). However, according to the report, the definition of the crime is vague (IWPR 15 Jan. 2004) and *Country Reports 2003* reported that by February 2004, there were no reported convictions under Article 132 (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 6.f). The Armenian parliament intended to debate amendments in February 2004 (IWPR 15 Jan. 2004); however, the Research Directorate did not find more recent reports updating whether the Armenian parliament amended trafficking laws in February or March 2004 among the sources consulted.