

Religion and the Secular State in Armenia

I. INTRODUCTION

The Armenian people are among the most ancient Christians in the world. Therefore, the history of Armenia has seen numerous wars waged for the sake of Christianity. The Armenian people have been proud of the conflicts that preserved the Christian identity of Armenians. Armenians view Vardan Mamikonyan, the leader of these combats, as a national hero and a symbol of their Christian identity. Armenia's Christian identity has continued to this day. This paper will examine this identity and how it has led to a special relationship between religion and the State during recent Armenian history.

For Armenians, Christianity was not only a religious option, but a cultural option as well. Being a part of the Christian world makes up one of the main cornerstones of Armenian historiography. Even fundamental religious institutions such as the Armenian Apostolic Church have attached particular significance to the cultural essence of Christianity. The Armenian Church sanctified not the miracle-workers, but the martyrs. The main virtue and merit of a Christian was his readiness to sacrifice himself for Christianity. The church always encouraged this phenomenon. This perception dominates other intellectual and cultural choices made by the Armenian people.

II. HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Many academics view Christianity as a main component of Armenia's identity. The Armenian Constitution reflects the importance of the church in Armenia. Article 8.1 reads: "The church shall be separate from the State in the Republic of Armenia. The Republic of Armenia recognizes the exclusive historical mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church as a national church, in the spiritual life, development of the national culture and preservation of the national identity of the people of Armenia."

Undoubtedly, the Armenian Apostolic Church has played an essential role in the historical and cultural orientation of Armenian people and impacted the nation's cultural and political conduct. In the 5th and 6th centuries, Armenians created their alphabet in order to provide an Armenian translation of the Bible. This history has provided Armenia with enormous sources for rendering Armenian history, as well as having a full picture of other countries' historical scene.

With over 1700 years of Christian history, Christianity has become a part of Armenia's ethnic identity rather than religious identification. The formal atheistic heritage of Soviet society has shifted the religious culture of Armenia. At present, many Armenians identify their ethnicity by their religious affiliation. Armenian society recognizes that different ethnicities have different religions. However, many Armenians disapprove of deviations from the general norm. This mentality is typical of Armenian authorities, although the legal sphere has tended to secure religious freedoms.

Although its constitution makes Armenia a secular country and separates church and State, the Armenian Apostolic Church is still perceived as a State church. However, no church or religious establishment, including the Armenian Apostolic Church, receives financial allocations from the state budget. Additionally, no religious activity is officially financed or receives tax exemptions. Most Armenians approve of this concept.

Defining "State religion" remains difficult despite this expression being widely used. The similarity between the Armenian words "state" and "national" likely make it difficult to define "State religion." Because the Armenian word for national can also mean "ethnic," many Armenians perceive the Armenian Apostolic Church as ethnic church, and

“national church” as “State church.” Thus, the Armenian Apostolic Church, or an ethnic-national church can also be perceived as a State church.

Armenian public opinion shuns religious proselytism and missionary practice despite granting each other a freedom of conscience. The Armenian Apostolic Church never proselytized. Armenians tend to view proselytizing by other religious organizations as political and a danger to the ethnic unity of Armenians. The media also promotes this view. Armenians see religious diversity as a direct threat to their ethnic unity. The Armenian Apostolic Church also safeguards this ethnic identity.

III. RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN ARMENIA

According to the last official census in 1991, the Armenian population was 3.2 million with ethnic minorities making up 2.2 percent. The official census did not identify religious affiliation, so official religious statistics of the country remain unknown. However, Armenians identify religion with nationality, so the nationality provided on the census will likely match with individual’s religious affiliation.

Experts believe that the main religious minorities follow their own ethnic religious doctrines. From this, one may determine that the number of ethnic religion practitioners likely corresponds to the number of those who identify with a specific ethnicity. Table 1 represents the ethnic composition of the population of Armenia.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of Armenia, 1991

Overall	Armenians	Assyrians	Yezidis	Greeks	Russians	Ukrainians	Kurds	Others
3,213,011	3,145,354	3409	40,620	1176	14,660	1633	1519	464

However, the number of ethnic groups does not necessarily correspond to the number of followers of each ethnic religion. Furthermore, the number of followers of a religious direction and the religious picture on ethnic minorities slightly diverge. The best example is that of ethnic Russians, whose ethnic group together with Presbyterians comprises the larger group “Old Ritualists.” They are also known as Molokans and perceived as “sect followers” in Russian society. Among Molokans and ethnic Russians are also ethnic Mordvins. Mordvins are perceived as Russians due to their Molokan affiliation. Eighty percent of Molokan respondents defined their ethnicity as Russian and their religion as Christian, Molokan, Hopper, Constant, or Maksimist. One percent of Old Ritualists defined their religion as Christianity.

Some observers of the Orthodox Church are concerned that the church list encompasses members of other ethnic groups such as Assyrians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians. One of the Russian Orthodox churches is located in the Assyrian village Dmitrovo/Ararat marz. Assyrians and Armenians make up a majority of the members. The number of ethnic Russians never seems to correspond with the number of Russian Orthodox religion followers. In Armenia, the Russian Orthodox Church is represented by four registered religious organizations. Due to their unorthodox religious convictions, Old Ritualists are not registered, though this does not hamper their religious practice.

Another ethnic minority group structure reveals incongruence between ethnicity and religious affiliation. People speaking one of the Iranian languages, Kurmangi, categorize themselves as Kurds or Ezidis, with most identifying with the latter. Both groups profess Ezidism. Muslims also make up a small percentage of Kurds. Some 40,620 Ezids and 1,519 Kurds would be listed as Ezidism followers if not for its non-traditional religious orientation. Ezidism is a religious trend with a strong focus on ethnicity, religious regulations, and cultural traditions meant to protect their ethnic purity. Throughout the last decade, this group has seen marked changes concerning the religious association of many inside this group. “New believers,” as they are called in Armenia, sometimes do not identify with a particular affiliation. Sometimes they say “we worship God,” “we worship the cross,” “we are Christians,” or “we follow Jesus.” Generally they belong to “Jehovah Witnesses” or “The Fifties Witnesses.” Notably no Kurds or Ezidis ever belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church because the Armenian Apostolic Church does not approve of

missionary practice. Of 302 respondents, 221 chose one of the traditional Ezidi religions such as a Sun-worshiper, Shams, or Yezidi. Sixty-one preferred new non-traditional religious trends: 22 Witnesses of Fifties, 9 Christians, 7 Followers of Jesus Christ; 23 identified with other trends, and 22 stated they had no particular affiliation. These results show that at least 20 percent of those questioned affiliate with non-traditional religions. These differences are a source of tension in some Kurdish-Ezidi families.

Women are more likely to become followers of a non-traditional religion. This can hamper traditional religious rituals inside the family. Ezidi families with strong religious backgrounds vehemently confront their spouses when they attempt to change.¹ Religion among Ezidis is the exclusive ingredient of ethnic identity and is first among ethnic indicators. Consequently, non-traditional religious trends in an Ezidi environment may arouse serious concerns among representatives of the Ezidi religious elite (Sheikhs and Peers) as well as intellectuals and community leaders. For Kurds and Ezidis, quantitative ethnic indicators do not correlate with religious indicators.²

Many representatives of the Assyrian community remain uncertain in determining their religious affiliation. In the four Assyrian villages where the majority of Assyrians are concentrated, people are not fully cognizant of their religious identity. In Dmitrovo village, since the Soviet times, there has been a Russian Orthodox Church where Assyrian people attended religious services. This tradition formed because there were no other Assyrian clerics for Russian-speaking Assyrians. Thus, the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church performed these services which led to a gradual conversion of many Assyrians to the Orthodox Church. The Assyrian congregation did not understand the specifics of Christian belief, but still call themselves “Christians.” The square in front of the Russian Orthodox Church has become the center for Assyrian national festivities, both secular and religious, even though these activities have little to do with the Orthodox church and doctrine. Many Dmitrovo Assyrians consider any Christian trend acceptable and implement new religious practice via existing activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, or Protestant Church.

During the last decade, in Dvin village, a Nestorian church attempted to unify the religious ethnicity of the Assyrians in Armenia. Assyrians dwelling in the villages Atzni and Nor Artagerz are far from being Orthodox or Nestorian; they call themselves Christians and reflect this identity by accepting new Christian trends as long as they can still preserve their cultural traditions.

All four settlements are permeated by non-traditional religious organization such as the Seventh-day Adventists, Witnesses of Fifties, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. “Just Christians” treat these religious trends with certain mistrust but still accept them as long as they don’t see any direct threat to their own identity. Research shows that 78 percent of the Assyrian respondents called themselves “just Christians” and only 5 percent “Orthodox Christians.” After the Oriental Assyrian Catholicosate Church opened in the village of Dvin, several local Assyrians began to identify their religion as Assyrian-Christian. The Assyrian community is represented by just one religious organization called “Assyrian Religious Organization of Armenia Holy Apostolic Church of Oriental Assyrian Catholicosate.” Other ethnic minorities in Armenia adhere to other “ethnic religions.”³ However, only the Jewish community, Jews of Armenia, is registered. The representative of the Catholic Church addresses the religious needs of Catholic Poles. Catholics in Armenia are represented by three registered religious organizations that

1. The religious practice of Yezidism is rather active, and it may be termed as “daily.” There is no event without sacrifice and no significant event in Yezidi life takes place without the participation of a religious mentor, such as important events such as marriage and death. However, the differences between the views on death and afterlife as well as on the practice of sacrifice often makes the Christian-Yezidi women, especially humble wives, go against the will of their husband, which is unacceptable in the Yezidi absolute patriarchal society.

2. Ezidism in Armenia is officially represented by two registered religious organizations.

3. For example, Ukrainians and Byelorussians adhere to the Orthodox religion; Greeks will be Greek Orthodox religion and Georgians are Georgian Orthodox. Poles tend to be Catholic, and Germans followers of Lutheranism. Jews, of course, may practice Judaism.

include mainly ethnic Armenians. Other registered religious groups include a wide range of Protestant organizations. These include 13 Evangelical Organizations, 21 Fifty Witnesses, and one each of Seventh-day Adventist, The Word of Life or Charismats, God's Church, The Anointed by God, and "Armenian Community of New Apostolic Church." "The Church of Jesus Christ's Last Days," "The Community of Baha'i Faith Followers," "The Christian Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses," and "Arordineri Ught" (Armenian Pagans).

The majority of Armenians are steadfast supporters of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Activity within this church varies. Even atheists identify themselves as followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Due to the efforts of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenia has seen a moderate increase in religious activity among youth. Charismats and Jehovah Witnesses are more "mobile" and actively proselyte, which has attracted new followers.

Apart from registered religious organizations, there are also functioning religious groups without official registration. In general, these groups can be classified into three areas:

1. Entities registered as a social organization, but holding religious practices, e.g., "Transcendental Meditation," "Armenian Rerich Association," and followers of the Moon Doctrine. Further research is required in order to determine the activity level, rituals, and the number of adherents.
2. Groups not registered in any legal form yet still performing religious activities, e.g., Russian Old Ritualists, Krishna's Followers, and Scientologists. The exact number of the followers of these groups is uncertain, but experts estimate that they are limited.

Why these groups remain unregistered remains unclear. The registration procedure is simple; it only lasts one month and does not cause any problems. Registration does not affect day-to-day operations of the community. Registration benefits communities by enabling the groups to engage in legal affairs. As previously mentioned, Old Russian Ritualists do not register due to their desire to minimize any contact with administrative bodies. It is possible that other religious communities and organizations may not register because the number of their followers is less than the two hundred required by law for the registration of a religious organization.

A far more important issue is why some religious groups are registered as non-governmental organizations rather than a religious organization. According to Armenian law, only religious organizations can legally exercise religious practice. Perhaps the central issue relates to a legal requirement that requires 200 or more members to register. Non-governmental organizations do not require a minimum number of members. Individual practitioners such as magicians or wizards have remained beyond legal focus. The law views them as beyond the framework of administrative and social interest.

IV. RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS, RELIGIOUS RIGHTS, AND EQUALITY

Armenia has signed on to all international conventions guaranteeing religious freedom and has consented to all treaties concerning religious rights. These treaties comprise an indivisible legislative part of Armenia. Thus, all international laws and agreements regarding freedom of conscience have legal effect in Armenia. At the same time, Armenia has initiated the formation on inter-state legislation regulating the legal relationships between individuals, religious organizations, and the State. It should be mentioned that the law "On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" was one of the first laws enacted by the independent Armenian State in 1991. The Supreme Soviet adopted these principles even prior to the Constitution and other international treaties. This law complies with international norms aimed at securing religious freedoms. The first three articles of Armenian law "On the freedom of conscience and on religious organizations" provide for a freedom of conscience and profession of faith. The first article reads: "Each citizen decides freely his/her position toward religion and has the right to profess a desired religion or not to profess any religion, and to engage in religious

rights individually or together with other citizens.” Article 2 and 3 provide an equality of rights “irrespective of their religious beliefs or religious affiliation.” It also states that “the right of freedom of conscience is subject only to such restrictions which are necessary to ensure public safety, law and order, the health and morality of the citizens and for the defense of the rights and freedom of other citizens.”

Armenia later placed these rights in the Constitution along with other basic human rights. The government not only provided a freedom of conscience and belief but also gave Armenians the freedom of religious organization. Article 8.1 guarantees: “Freedom of activities for all religious organizations.” Article 26 guarantees: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes freedom to change the religion or belief and freedom to, either alone or in community with others, manifest the religion or belief through preaching, church ceremonies, and other religious rites.” Article 27 of the Constitution of Armenia reads: “Everyone shall have the right to freely express his/her opinion. No one shall be forced to recede or change his/her opinion. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression including freedom to search for, receive, and impart information and ideas by any means of information regardless of the state frontiers.” Article 28 summarizes the aforementioned ideas: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others.”

Equality of rights for Armenian citizens is also reflected in “On Child’s Rights,” which highlights religious protections. The fourth article mentioned is titled “Possession of Equal Rights for Children.” It states that “Children have equal rights - regardless of their and their parents’ or other legal representatives’ (adoptive fathers, tutors and curators) nationality, race, sex, language, **conscience**, social status, education, conditions of child’s birth, state of health and other circumstances.” Armenian Legislation secures the rights of parents to bring up their children the way they choose and in the faith they desire. According to Article 10 of “On Child’s Rights,” “Every child has right to free conception, conscience and denomination. [A] Child’s views, beliefs and opinions are subject to proper consideration in accordance with his age and maturity.” The right to the freedom of conscience and expression of beliefs may be constrained only by law if it is necessary for purposes of state and social security, public order, child’s health, their moral character or for the protection of the rights and liberties of other persons.”

In view of child’s interests, according to Article 10 of “On Child’s Rights”: “The affiliation of a child under the age of 16 to religious organizations without the consent of a parent or other legal representative.”

Article 111 of the Family Code also counsels that when preparing for rearing of children deprived of parental care “his/her ethnic origin, *certain religious* or culture belonging, native tongue, possibilities of providing continuity of rearing and education should be taken into consideration.”

Apart from norms forbidding the segregation against the person, Armenian Legislation tries to prevent the cases of religious hatred. For instance, according to Article 9 of the law “On Parties”: “Formation and activity of such parties, whose aims or activity are directed towards . . . the instigation of national, racial and religious hatred, incitement to violence and war, is prohibited.” In Article 9 of the Armenian law “On Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations” there is a provision that accounts for possible future bans of public events: “The organization and convention of public events is prohibited if such events aim to . . . instigate national, racial or religious hatred, campaign for violence or war, as well as in other causes prohibited by the law.” According to Article 21 of the RA law “on Non-Governmental Organisations” the NGO can be dissolved if the activity of the organization is directed towards . . . instigating national, racial or religious hatred, campaign for violence, or war.” According to Article 8(b) of “On Advertising,” an advertisement is banned “if it contains insulting phrases, comparisons, and images with regard to race, nationality . . . religion or other beliefs.”

According to Article 2 of the law “On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations,” “The direct or indirect limitations on the citizens’ right to belief, the persecution on religious grounds or the inhibition of other rights, and the incitement of

religious hatred entail responsibility before the law.”

Crimes committed out of religious hatred or religious bigotry are prosecutable according to a series of criminal code Articles: 112, 113, 119, 143, 185, and 265. Article 160 of the same Code prescribes punishment for cases of “hindering the exercising of religious rights,” while Articles 226.1 and 226.2 cover cases of “incitement of hatred based on natinality, race or religion.” Article 392 of the Criminal Code entitled “Crimes Against Human Security” governs “[d]eportation, illegal arrest, enslavement, mass and regular execution without trial, kidnapping followed by disappearance, torture or cruel treatment of civilians” as well as crimes committed against religious groups. Whereas Article 393, entitled “Genocide” defines genocide as a serious crime based on the religious factor: “[T]he complete or partial extermination of national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups by means of killing the members of this group, inflicting severe damage to their health, violently preventing them from childbearing, enforced hand-over of children, violent re-population, or physical elimination of the members of this group” Article 397.1 of the Criminal Code enables prosecution for “the acts of denial, downplaying, approval, and justification of genocide and other crimes against peace and human security . . . if it has been implemented on the basis of race, skin color, nationality, ethnicity or **religious** affiliation for the purpose of instigating hatred, segregation and violence against a person or group of people.”

V. INTERNAL (*FORUM INTERNUM*) AND EXTERNAL (*FORUM EXTERNUM*) FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS: SELF-GOVERNMENT AND EQUALITY OF RIGHTS AMONG RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

According to Article 8.1 of the Constitution, “in Armenia the church shall be separate from the State.” Before the adoption of the Constitution, Article 17 of the Armenian code covered this principle.

“On the freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations” states that “In the Republic of Armenia the Church and the State are separate.” The same article defines the internal relations between the church and the State.

According to this article the State:

1. Shall not force a citizen to adhere to any religion.
2. Shall not interfere in the activities and internal affairs of the Church and religious organizations as long they operate in accordance with the law; no state agency or person acting on behalf of this agency shall operate within a Religious Organization.
3. Prohibits the participation of the Church in governing the State and shall not impose any governmental functions on the Church or Religious organization.

Thus, religious organizations have the right to organize and administer their activity according to their internal institutional structure. They also have the right to employ their own personnel, and to appoint, replace, and dismiss their employees. These organizations also have discretion over their budgets according to their own standards and desires. When dealing with internal problems, the organizations are not accountable to any governmental body and operate according to their own internal code. In other words, the law provides religious organizations with the right to act independently from the State. “On the Freedom of Conscience and On Religious Organizations” provides for not only the freedom of conscience of individuals but also for the internal autonomy of religious organizations.

Accepting the right of religious organizations to operate independently, the Legislation of Armenia stipulates the following rights: the right to obtain and dispose of property, the right to organize religious education, the right to train clergy, the right to publish and disseminate religious literature, the right to purchase religiously significant objects and materials, the right to accept donations, the right to have charity activities, and other miscellaneous rights specified in Article 7 of “On the Freedom of Conscience and

Religious Organizations.” To take advantage of these rights, a religious organization must register with the government and receive recognition as a legal entity according to the procedure set forth in Article 7. Religious organizations are formed on a voluntary basis. Many of these organizations resemble NGOs. However, religious organizations differ from NGOs under “On Non-Governmental Organizations.” This statute states that “NGOs are not allowed to engage in religious activity; only registered religious organizations can perform such functions.” According to Article 14 of “Freedom of Conscience and On Religious Organizations,” “A religious Community or organization is recognized as a judicial person after being registered by the Committee of Religious Affairs of the Council of Ministers.” The registration procedure requires a precondition; the number of the members should not be less than 200. Although children under 18 can participate in their parents’ religious community activities, they cannot be registered as members of the religious organization. According to Article 14 of the abovementioned law, there is “positive” discrimination for ethnic religions because ethnic groups can register their religious organization without any membership number restrictions.

The Armenian registration procedure is simple and can be completed within a month if religious organizations submit the required documents upfront. According to Article 16, the registration may be rejected if the application is contrary to any laws currently in effect. However, the code provides a remedial opportunity if rejected: “Applicants whose registration has been rejected or no decision is rendered within the deadline, may seek judicial remedy.” So far, no registration application has been turned down.

Religious organizations cannot perform state functions, although Armenian legislation does not prohibit cooperation between the State and religious organizations. There are numerous examples of the cooperation between the State and religious organizations such as social aid distribution as well as educational and cultural activities. Some of these operations have involved the State, various Protestant organizations, the Mormon Church, Catholics, and others.

Only the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has the most followers of any religious organization in Armenia, has legally regulated relations with the State. The law “On the Relations between the State of Armenia and The Holy Apostolic Church of Armenia,” regulates the relation of the State and the Church concerning the management and study of cultural establishments, collections, museums, libraries, and archives in possession of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This same law provides state recognition of Armenian Apostolic Church marriages, provided the marriage is registered in the corresponding civic establishment. No legal restriction prevents the State from having legally regulated relationships with other religious organizations.

Relationships between the State and religious organizations are regulated by a special Department on Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs [“DEMRA”]. This department is responsible for distributing information on religious freedoms, analyzing religious situations, discussing urgent problems, and seeking solutions via regular meetings with religious organizations. The DEMRA is also responsible for providing help to the Ministry of Justice concerning the registration of religious organizations. Individuals can also apply to DEMRA for counsel on religious rights and freedoms, or to defend these rights. If necessary, DEMRA can turn to outside experts. In such cases, individuals or religious organizations do not bear financial responsibilities. However, the Department does not have an independent expert team. In case of complaints, the Department can seek judicial remedy.

VI. HISTORICAL MONUMENTS, SANCTUARIES, AND OTHER PLACES FOR PERFORMING RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

According to Article 7 of the law “On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations,” religious organizations have the right “to perform religious services, rites, and ceremonies: in sanctuaries and buildings belonging to them, in places of pilgrimage, in religious institutions, as well as cemeteries, houses and residences of citizens, hospitals, in homes for the mentally retarded and the handicapped, detainment centers, military

campus at the request of citizens living there and being members of a given religious organization.”

There are no special registration or inventory procedures for sanctuaries unless these sanctuaries have special historical or architectural value. No religious organization can interfere with the relations between the State or any other organization. Nor can religious organizations interfere with the selecting and establishing of a sanctuary. This procedure is subject to laws governing the relations between the State and religious organizations, as well as by architectural norms.

The government may earmark special sums from the budget to renovate sanctuaries or places of particular historical-architectural value, if these places are national property and are used only by groups. For example, in 2007 the State allocated funds to repair the roof of a Russian Orthodox Church. In 2008, it financed the renovation of a Jewish cemetery and several churches. It should be stated that according to law, religious organizations should maintain privately owned sanctuaries; thus many religious organizations prefer to have their sanctuaries as state property. State-owned properties have a better possibility of reconstruction and maintenance.

At present, according to the survey conducted by the Scientific Center of Monument Research, many monuments are listed as being under state protection, including monuments belonging to the AAC, as well as historical monuments such as pagan temples and Chalcedonic churches.⁴

VII. PRINCIPLES OF STATE SECULARISM

According to Article 5, subsection 6 of the “Law on Education,” no religion is taught in state-funded schools in Armenia: “Education in the educational establishments of Armenia is of a secular character.” “The State Educational Establishment of Armenia” describes “the subject matter and objective of non-commercial organizations.” It states that “[t]he activity of the establishment is based on democracy and humanism, accessibility, association of national and human rights, free development of a human being, autonomy, and secular principles of education.” Religious organizations, however, have the right to educate and train their members, as stipulated in the law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations.” Article 7(b)(c), provides guidance concerning how religious organizations can establish groups for religious instruction by utilizing the facilities belonging to churches.

The religious moral norms regulating human relations are not accepted by the judicial system and are not applied if an individual prefers to regulate his affairs by secular norms. There are no cases of internal problems of religious organization members disputed in the courts of Armenia. Such issues must find resolution inside a religious organization, by norms of the organization’s internal Code. No member of a religious organization can appeal to the court if his rights are violated. The court never applies or refers to religious norms.

In Armenia there are no recorded cases of someone expressing offense concerning a religious symbol. Armenian law does not prohibit the wearing of religious symbols such as clothes, scarves, or other symbols in public places. Armenians seem to support freedom of religious expression through dress and practice.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Armenia is one of the world’s oldest and most thoroughly Christian countries. It has Armenia has nevertheless allowed people of all denominations and faiths to worship freely. Armenia has established legal protections for people of all faiths. Because of the special relationship between ethnicity and religion in Armenia, the legal system provides freedoms to individuals concerning their manner of worship.

4. The list of historical monuments under State protection that was prepared for this report has been eliminated from this interim publication.