

---

# ARMENIA

---

## Republic of Armenia

**Population:** 3.1 million (0.8 million under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 44,660

**Compulsory recruitment age:** 18

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 18

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** signed 24 September 2003

**Other treaties ratified** (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II

***Under-18s in the ethnic Armenian refugee community may have been forcibly and illegally recruited into the army. The recruitment of children from the age of 15 appeared to be allowed in times of war or national emergency.***

---

## Context

Peace negotiations continued between Armenia and Azerbaijan, brokered by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to end the conflict over the disputed status of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>1</sup> Breaches of the ceasefire occurred throughout the second half of 2003, with cross-border shelling and exchanges of gunfire resulting in some casualties.<sup>2</sup> Military conscripts were treated brutally by their superior officers or with their complicity.<sup>3</sup> Dozens of people were sentenced to imprisonment for conscientious objection to compulsory military service. In December 2003 parliament adopted a law providing for unarmed military service or alternative civilian service but both, at almost double the length of ordinary military service, were of punitive length.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 2002 around 40 people were under sentence of death but there was a moratorium on executions. In 2003 Armenia abolished the death penalty in peacetime.

---

## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

Under the constitution, "Every citizen shall participate in the defence of the Republic of Armenia in a manner prescribed by law" (Article 47).<sup>5</sup> Conscription and voluntary military service are regulated by the Law on Military Service, as amended in 2002, and the 1998 Law on Conscription.<sup>6</sup>

In July 2003 Armenia reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that boys are registered for conscription at 16 and that men between the ages of 18 and 27 who meet the required health standards are liable for

conscription, in accordance with the Law on Conscription (Articles 5 and 11). The minimum age for voluntary recruitment is 18. Men who have completed their compulsory military service and women may sign an agreement to serve on a voluntary basis. The report said that there had been no underage recruitment since the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict ended in 1994.<sup>7</sup>

However, forced conscription of ethnic Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan reportedly continued, in violation of the 1999 Law on Refugees, which exempts them from military service. The parents of such refugees were said to be reluctant to complain for fear of reprisals against their sons.<sup>8</sup> Most had reached conscription age. However, one 16 year old was called to register for conscription and at the same time given a call-up notice for two years later. Another student, in the tenth grade where most are aged 15 or 16, was reported to have been seized from his schoolroom and conscripted into the army.<sup>9</sup>

The 1999 Law on Mobilization Preparation and Mobilization, which provides for military recruitment during war or national emergency, makes no explicit reference to the minimum age of recruits, but sets out the conditions under which citizens will not serve (including women and children).<sup>10</sup> In its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the government stated that "It is forbidden for children aged under 15 to participate in military activities", which appeared to indicate that the recruitment of 15 to 18 year olds is permitted in some circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

### Military training and military schools

Officers are trained at the Vazgen Sarkisyan Military Institute but the minimum age of admission for cadets was not clear.<sup>12</sup> The Law on Conscription provides for pre-conscription training in schools and specialized secondary education institutions (Article 8).<sup>13</sup> The training reportedly consists of civil defence classes and weapons training for one hour a week.<sup>14</sup> It was unclear to what extent the training is provided in schools across the country. The government provided no specific information in response to questions about the "use of extra-curricular activities and the inculcation of patriotism" in children when the Committee on the Rights of the Child was reviewing Armenia's January 2004 periodic report.<sup>15</sup>

---

1 International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2003-2004*, Oxford University Press, October 2003.

2 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003*, February 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/c1470.htm>; Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), *Caucasus Reporting Service*, No. 190, 7 August 2003, <http://www.iwpr.net>.

- 3 Sometimes known as “hazing” – an institutionalized system of extreme physical abuse and psychological humiliation inflicted over an extended period on the most recent or junior conscripts by longer-serving conscripts or senior soldiers. While not formally condoned, lack of supervision allows the practice to continue unchecked. The precise form it takes may vary from one army to another, but its essential features are that it is systematic, continual, status-related, and usually carried out by those who have previously been its victims.
- 4 *Amnesty International Reports 2002, 2003 and 2004*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>.
- 5 Constitution, at National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.parliament.am>.
- 6 Aghasy Yenokian, *Armenia: Civilians in national security policy*, Conference Paper, November 2002, Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, <http://www.dcaf.ch>; Second periodic report of Armenia to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/93.Add 6, 17 July 2003, <http://www.ohchr.org>.
- 7 Second periodic report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, op. cit.
- 8 US Department of State, op. cit.
- 9 Armenian Refugees Supporting League and Armenian Constitutional Right Protective Center, *Monitoring of implementation of rights of refugees in relation to military conscription and army service in the Republic of Armenia*, Yerevan 2001, [http://www.osce.org/documents/oy/2001/01/145\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/oy/2001/01/145_en.pdf).
- 10 *Zakon o mobilizatsionnoi podgotovke i mobilizatsii* (Law on Mobilization Preparation and Mobilization) (in Russian), March 1999, at National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.parliament.am>.
- 11 Second periodic report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, op. cit.
- 12 Armenian Public TV, “Strong army guarantees peace in region – Armenian leader”, 16 March 2004, posted 18 March 2004 at *Armenia Daily Digest*, <http://www.eurasianet.org>.
- 13 Second periodic report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, op. cit.
- 14 Child Soldiers Coalition interview with defence spokesperson, Armenian embassy, United Kingdom (UK), 7 March 2004.
- 15 UN news release, “Committee on rights of child reviews second periodic report of Armenia”, 15 January 2004, <http://www.unog.ch/news2/documents/newsen/crco405e.htm>.