"THE A.D. SAKHAROV ARMENIAN HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION CENTRE" NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION



ANNUAL REPORT
2024

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PREFACE

Dear friends and colleagues,

We kindly present to you "The A.D. Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Protection Centre" NGO (hereinafter referred to as the Sakharov Centre or the Organization) activity report of 2024 (hereinafter referred to as the Report). This report summarizes the Sakharov Centre's mission, principles, adopted values, activity goals, scope of beneficiaries, as well as data on the implemented projects and target costs, financial sources and other necessary information.

The Sakharov Centre has always emphasized the observance of the principles of legality, good faith, transparency and accountability of the Organization's activities both to its members, beneficiaries, donor organizations and partners, and to the Republic of Armenia. For this purpose, the Sakharov Centre submitted reports on its activities and financial sources to the State Revenue Committee of the Republic of Armenia and published them on its official website¹, both in previous years and in the period under review, in accordance with the RA Law "On Public Organizations".

During the reporting period, the Organization, within the framework of the grant project, provided free individual and group legal consultations in the form of in-person, online and out-of-office consultations. Legal awareness leaflets were prepared and distributed, analyses were conducted and draft legal acts were drafted, on which proposals were submitted to state and local government bodies. In addition, the Organization also issued letters responding to human rights violations addressed to relevant state administration bodies. The Organization, together with its branches and central office, also conducted long-term and short-term monitoring in problematic areas of human rights, presenting the results to interested parties.

In 2020, after the second Artsakh war (44-day war), the list of beneficiaries of the Organization also included our compatriots forcibly displaced from the Republic of Artsakh. 348 of them were provided with free legal consultations on their rights and fundamental freedoms, their limitations, as well as violations and appeal mechanisms, and the scope of powers of administrative bodies. With the support of the Organization's legal services, in 2024, 140 beneficiaries were able to restore their rights.

In addition to human rights activities, the Civil Society School (CSS) and the Research-Analytical Centres (RACs) established by the Organization play an important role in the Organization. Through them, we contribute to the informal education of young people and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the communities of the Republic of Armenia and the formation of a legally aware society.

The Research-Analytical Centres (RACs), formed by young researchers, have carried out expert and research activities, as a result of which 10 analytical and research works have been developed. In particular, the following studies have been carried out: "Changes in the water level of Lake Sevan over the past five years", "Voluntary certification of teachers, 2023", "The importance of the 11th grade jurisprudence course in social studies, its relevance to the age group and accessibility in 2023", "2022 and 2023. Comparative analysis of voluntary teacher certification using tables and histograms" (the "Teacher's Memorial" methodological manual was also developed), "Analysis and assessment of the income potential of the Gavar community (2017–2023)", "Analysis of expenditure directions of the Gavar community fund budget (2017–2023)", "The level of involvement of 18–35-year-old Artsakh residents forcibly displaced from Artsakh in the community in 2023–2024", "Youth issues in the Goris community", "Legal and moral boundaries of the use of artificial intelligence in a higher education environment", "The importance of the strategic program action plan in the effective management of the organization". The analyzes were presented to local self-government bodies, state and public institutions for use in the policy development process.

Active young people participating in the CSS have become informal leaders and organizers in their communities. The effectiveness of the CSS is also evidenced by the fact that 13 initiative groups have been created in Shirak, Gegharkunik and Syunik regions by those who participated in the trainings, and 10 CSOs have been registered. Dear reader, we hope that you will find in this report all the necessary information about the activities of the Organization that interests you. However, if you have additional questions that you will not find answers to here, or observations, you can contact us by writing a feedback letter. Our team will be happy to answer your questions.

Sincerely, Meri Khachatryan Director of "The A.D. Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Protection Centre" NGO

¹ http://www.sakharovcentre.org/?page=reports&lng=am&vear=2022

1. Foundations of Organization Creation

The Sakharov Centre is an independent public association and has the status of a non-profit organization. The organization, which is the successor of "The A. D. Sakharov's Armenian Fund for Progress, Human Rights Protection and Mercy" was founded on October 9, 1990 based on Resolution No. 457 of the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR. Since December 26, 1997, the Organization has been registered as a non-governmental organization in the State Register of Legal Entities of the RA Ministry of Justice (registration certificate: N 414).

The organization was re-registered on January 21, 2000, and the new charter was registered on July 14, 2006 (registration number: 211.171.04085). Based on the decision of the meeting of the Sakharov Centre, with the changes and additions of the Organization, the charter with the new edition was state registered on December 8, 2017.

The organization operates in the Republic of Armenia, has three branches in Shirak (1996), Gegharkunik (1997) and Syunik (1997) regions, respectively in the cities of Gyumri, Gavar and Goris. The organization does not limit the geography of its activities only to these three regions, the place of residence of the beneficiaries is not an obstacle when carrying out human rights activities or providing free legal assistance.

The Sakharov Centre independently determines its organizational structure, object of activity, goals and forms. The organization operates on the basis of the constitution of the Republic of Armenia, laws, other normative legal acts, international treaties of the Republic of Armenia and its charter.

2. Management bodies of the organization

The management bodies of the Sakharov Centre are the highest body - the Assembly, the executive body - the Director, and the collegial management body of the Organization - the Council. The executive and collegial bodies of the organization are elective. Regular meetings of the organization are conducted once in five years, but the Assembly has the right to organize meetings as well, according to the need and urgency of the issues.

The highest governing body of the Sakharov Centre is the Assembly of its members, one of the most important matters of its authority is the approval of the Organization's charter, the making of amendments and/or additions to it or the adoption of decisions on approving the charter with a new edition, the adoption of decisions on the creation of another legal entity or engaging in entrepreneurial activities, and other important issues.

The executive body of the Organization is the director, whose powers include all matters aimed at managing the current activities of the Organization, as well as ensuring the activities of the Organization's management bodies. The director acts on behalf of the Organization without a power of attorney.

The collegial governing body is the Council, which discusses and makes decisions on issues related to the Organization's activities, except for the powers reserved to the Organization's Meeting and the director by the charter. The Council can also exercise other powers provided by the resolutions of the Assembly.

3. The organization's mission, principles, values, activity goals, beneficiaries

Mission

The mission of the Sakharov Centre is to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and promote the development of the democratic system in the Republic of Armenia.

Principles

The principles of the organization's activity are legality, non-discrimination, good faith, voluntary membership, common interests of members, self-management, accountability.

Values

The values of the Sakharov Centre can be viewed from two perspectives:

- <u>internal values</u> that strengthen the potential of the public Organization to effectively implement its statutory goals,
- external values that contribute to the democratization of RA public life and the supremacy of rights.

Internal values are:

• apolitical nature of the organization,

- continuous improvement of the professionalism of employees,
- high level of discipline and responsibility,
- quick response to challenges arising in Armenia,
- intolerance of any discrimination in public life.

External values are:

- the supremacy of international norms for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- the supremacy of the RA constitution and national legislation,
- equality of natural and legal persons before the law,
- independence from external and internal influences.

The Sakharov Centre is independent of political and other influences, impartial in its activities and responsible for the results of the work performed.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANIZATION

Objectives of the activity

- Contribute to ensuring the protection of human rights and freedoms.
- Contribute to strengthening the capacities of civil society structures.
- Contribute to ensuring public participation in decision-making and public administration control processes.
- Contribute to raising the level of legal awareness, legal culture and perception of the population.
- Provide free legal services.
- Support the holding of fair and transparent elections in the republic and the establishment of an electoral institution, for this purpose, to carry out public control over elections and referendums, including an observation mission.
- Conduct studies, monitoring and evaluation of the activities of state and local self-government bodies and the programs implemented by them, as well as socio-political, socio-economic, educational, cultural and environmental spheres.
- Participate in the creation of laws and other legal acts and public discussions on the protection of human rights in the Republic of Armenia.
- Carry out other activities in accordance with the goals of the Organization and not prohibited by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

5. ORGANIZATION BENEFICIARIES

- Socially disadvantaged citizens of the population
- Pensioners
- People with disabilities
- Refugees, refugee status and temporary asylum seekers
- Citizens of foreign countries
- Migrants and internally displaced people
- Residents of natural and man-made disasters
- Servicemen and their family members
- People with limited functional capacity and persons recognized as incapable
- Trafficked and abused persons
- Children, young people

- Members and beneficiaries of public associations and foundations
- Individual entrepreneurs and legal entities
- Citizen initiative groups
- People forcibly displaced from Artsakh and temporarily or permanently settled in Armenia

6. THE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITY

6.1. Human rights protection

In 2024, lawyers from the Organization's central office and branches provided free individual, group, inperson and online legal advice to 3,587 people, of whom 1,008 were men and 2,579 were women, including:

Legal advice			
Sakharov Centre office	Total	Man	Woman
Yerevan (central)	1247	409	838
Shirak	1268	390	878
Gegharkunik	497	138	359
Syunik	575	71	504
Total	3587	1008	2579

556 people participated in 91 group counseling meetings conducted by the organization's lawyers.

Group consultations conducted by lawyers			
Sakharov Centre office	Times	Participant	
Yerevan (central)	4	17	
Shirak	69	253	
Gegharkunik	10	130	
Syunik	8	156	
Total	91	556	

During the reporting period, the heads of the Organization's branches and experts involved in the programs also held 26 consultative meetings under the "Human Rights Protection" component of the grant programs. 266 people participated in these meetings.

Group consultations conducted by organization representatives and involved experts			
Sakharov Centre office	Times	Participant	
Shirak	15	110	
Gegharkunik	3	60	
Syunik	8	96	
Total	26	266	

123 leaflets on human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as informational leaflets, were developed and distributed.

Leaflets		
Sakharov Centre office	Count	
Yerevan (central)	29	
Shirak	34	
Gegharkunik	28	
Syunik	32	
Total	123	

224 letters, requests, and applications were sent to local, regional, and central government bodies for the purpose of extrajudicial protection of public interests and citizens' rights.

Letters, applications and requests			
Sakharov Centre office	Count		
Yerevan (central)	89		
Shirak	60		
Gegharkunik	33		
Syunik	6		
Total	188		

With the support of the organization's legal service, in 2024, charters and founding documents of 10 legal entities, newly established public organizations, were drawn up and submitted for state registration. In the same year, the organization also acted as a judicial representative, representing the interests of 1 beneficiary in court.

Sakharov Centre office	Drafting charters and founding documents of legal entities	Representation in court	Submission of claims, applications, petitions and complaints
Yerevan (central)	0	0	19
Shirak	9	1	16
Gegharkunik	0	0	13
Syunik	1	0	0
Total	10	1	48

6.2. Monitoring and Advocacy

In the context of advocacy, 12 short-term and long-term monitoring exercises were carried out in 2024.

In 2024, 60 analyses of beneficiary cases, phenomena, and existing legal regulations were prepared and 26 proposals on draft laws and other legal acts were submitted to stakeholders.

Sakharov Centre office	Number of legal analyses	Number of legislative proposals
Yerevan (central)	11	15

Shirak	21	6
Gegharkunik	13	2
Syunik	15	3
Total	60	26

6.3. Strengthening the Civil Society

In order to strengthen the civil society, since 2004, CSOs have been operating in the cities of Gyumri, Gavar, and Goris, which were established at the initiative of the Organization. The main streams of CSOs are "Management Training for CSOs", "Advanced Training for CSOs", "Training of Teachers", "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Training". Various preparatory courses are also implemented for different target groups.

In total, in 2024, 1016 listeners participated in all the trainings and various courses of the Organization.

Sakharov Centre office	Number of attendees
Shirak	477
Gegharkunik	224
Syunik	315
Total	1016

6.4. Research-analytical activities

The research-analytical work carried out in the organization's Shirak, Gegharkunik and Syunik branches was aimed at forming a specialized centre based on policy development, analysis and modeling of development prospects, based on the principle of a think-tank.

The main directions of activity are:

- Increasing the overall sustainability of CSOs and community-based structures and foundations in the regions of Armenia.
- Developing civic activism.
- Developing ways of cooperation between experienced, specialized and community-based CSOs.
- Transferring knowledge, experience and potential to civil society.
- Organizing the activities of expert councils in branches.
- Implementing expert and research activities.
- Research conducted by active youth, reports compiled.
- Compilation and analysis of theories of materials related to the field in electronic media and social networks.
- Development of educational and thematic plans, methods and technologies of educational modules of the Civil Society School.
- Working with CSO trainees, providing feedback.
- Compilation of training manuals, guides, databases.
- Organizing the implementation of courses by CSO trainees.
- 3-day training camp entitled "Research Skills and Critical Thinking" In Tsaghkadzor.

Public meetings

- «"2023 Activities and 2024 Challenges" Expert Meeting-Discussion
- Presentation-Discussion of the "CSO Benchmark Armenia 2024" Report
- "Best Interests of the Child" Forum
- Teleconference "Proportional Development of United Communities"
- "Research and Project-Based Formal and Non-Formal Education as an Effective Tool for Developing Learners' Thinking" Meeting-Discussion
- Joint Discussion with Communities 2024 on the participatory budgeting process
- Implementation of a town hall (community meeting) on the topic "Expectations of education sector officials, specialists and recipients"

- Discussion on the RA Law on Voluntary Work with NGO representatives
- Discussion in communities on the topic "Level of involvement of Artsakh residents aged 18-35 forcibly displaced from the Republic of Artsakh in the community"
- Public discussion on "Mechanisms for the protection of the rights of persons forcibly displaced from the Republic of Artsakh in relation to access to social support programs provided by the state" with our compatriots forcibly displaced from Artsakh

Television broadcasts

- The Role of Civil Society in the Development of Unified Communities", 07.03.2024, TV program, https://progressgyumri.am/news/17803
- "The Effectiveness of Structural Changes in the Field of Territorial Governance", 13.03.2024, TV program, https://progressgyumri.am/news/17819
- TV discussion "Proportional Development of Unified Communities" Gyumri, 25.09.2024, https://progressgyumri.am/news/19381
- "Hetq" media outlet prepared and published a TV discussion entitled "What Kind of Community Do I Want to Live in?" with the participation of the head of the Gegharkunik branch on the implementation of the participatory budgeting process by local governments in the Republic of Armenia, https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/169703, https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/169703, https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/169703, https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/169703, https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/169703, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksydQx-Wto0&t=1s

6.5. Resource Centre Services

Community Resource Centres established in the branches provided educational, consulting, public awareness and information dissemination, and technical assistance services to 306 organizations (CSOs, local governments, private).

6.6. Press Review Management

In 2024, the staff of the three branches of the Organization compiled monthly press reviews (a total of 48 press reviews) on civil society activities, human rights violations, as well as the political, socio-economic situation in the Republic of Armenia. As a rule and accepted practice, press review management serves as a basis for the Organization to conduct legal analyses, monitoring, as well as to address the state administration and/or local governments of the Republic of Armenia with relevant requests and recommendations.

6.7. Provision of Sub-grants

During the reporting year, the Organization provided small sub-grants to 8 community-based civil society organizations operating in the Shirak, Gegharkunik and Syunik regions of the Republic of Armenia within the framework of the grant project to implement short-term projects. As a result:

- 8 electronic and printed articles were published,
- 5 focus group and round table discussions were held,
- more than 400 questionnaires were developed and distributed and 380 surveys were conducted,
- 64-hour seminar-training courses were organized and conducted,
- 6 disaster risk resilience reports-guidelines were compiled,
- 4 online discussions were conducted,
- resource centre services were provided to 11 legal entities and more than 180 individuals,
- 3 individual-expert surveys were compiled,
- a social platform was established on Facebook for advertising and selling products of women entrepreneurs,
- more than 100 proposals were submitted to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia, the staffs of the governors of Shirak, Lori, Gegharkunik and Syunik regions, community administrations, educational institutions, cooperating civil society organizations, and individual experts.

In total, 8 sub-grants were implemented in cooperation with 12 CSOs and 3 local government structures. 230 direct and about 200,000 indirect beneficiaries (including readers of publications, articles, reports) from 6 urban communities and 23 rural settlements in 4 regions were involved in the implemented sub-grants.

6.8. Cooperation and participation

The organization cooperates with more than 100 local and international organizations.

Both the director and staff members of the organization have been involved in various working groups within the framework of their human rights activities:

- Member of the jury of the competition for the concept of revitalization of the oldest historical Kond district of Yerevan.
- Member of the working group for the development of the draft law of the Republic of Armenia on Youth Policy, head of the youth workers subgroup.
- Member of the Self-Regulatory Organization of Mediators of the Republic of Armenia, qualified mediator.
- Member of the working group on the protection of the rights of refugees from Iraq of the Unified Social Service of the Shirak region.
- Member of the commission dealing with gender issues under the staff of the Shirak regional administration.
- Member of the social cooperation coordination council at the Gavar regional centre of the Unified Social Service of the Gegharkunik region.

7. ORGANIZATION COUNCIL

The scope of the Council's powers:

- 1. discusses and makes decisions on issues related to the activities of the Organization, with the exception of the powers reserved to the meeting and the director by this Charter,
- 2. gets acquainted with all documents related to the activities of the Organization and submits proposals to its bodies on issues subject to mandatory discussion in accordance with the procedure established by the Charter of the Organization,
- 3. requests and receives information on the activities of the Organization,
- 4. establishes the procedure and conditions for keeping records of the Organization's members and volunteers, as well as the procedure for applying incentives and penalties to the Organization's members,
- 5. exercises other powers provided for by the Charter of the Organization or the decision of the meeting.

8. PARTNER INFORMATION

The organization's partners are presented below.

Civil society organizations (CSOs)

- "World Council of Churches Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table" Foundation
- "DIZAK ART" NGO
- "ECOLUR" Informational NGO
- "Armenian Caritas" Benevolent NGO
- "Biosophia" Centre For Health, Environmental And Agricultural Development (NGO)
- "The Progress of Gyumri" NGOs
- Journalists' Club "Asbarez"
- "Bayazet" Armenian Analytical Research Centre NGO
- "Free Fly" Social-Economic Development Foundation
- "Sarvor" Touristic, Social-Educational, Ecological NGO
- "Pomegranate Seed" Community Development Foundation
- "Agape World" Youth NGO
- "BLEDJAN" Environmental, Social, Business Support NGO
- "Educational and Informational" NGO
- "Women for Development" NGO

- "Alvan Tsaghik" NGO
- "Shirak Teachers' Union" NGO
- "Contact Plus" Human Rights NGO
- "Stability and Progress" NGO
- "Kanani" Social-Psychological NGO
- Northern Youth NGO
- "Sarapat" NGO
- "Syunyats nakhadprotsakanner" NGO
- Goris Press Club
- "Youth Initiative Club" NGO
- "The Sun From Syunik" NGO
- "Women's Resource Centre" NGO
- "Partnership and Teaching" NGO
- "Clean Goris" NGO
- "Goris Youth Initiative Centre" NGO
- "Tteni" NGO
- The Armenian Red Cross Society
- Impact HAB Goris
- Jinishyan Memorial Foundation

Local Self-Governing Bodies

- Amasiya community hall
- Ashotsk community hall
- Gyumri community hall
- Gavar community hall
- Chambarak community hall
- Sevan community hall
- Vardenis community hall
- Goris community hall
- Tatev community hall
- Tegh community hall
- Meghri community hall
- Sisian community hall
- Kajaran community hall

Other institutions

- Shirak State University
- Gavar State University
- Gavar State Medical College
- Gavar State Agricultural College
- Gavar State Music College
- Goris State University
- Goris State Agricultural College
- Goris State College
- Lawyer's office of Shirak region
- Shirak Regional Prosecutor's Office
- Juvenile Department of Gyumri Police
- Shirak, Gegharkunik, Syunik region schools
- "Syunyats Yerkir" newspaper
- Preschool No. 1 named after Vazgen Sargsyan of Goris
- Children's library of Goris
- Nursing homes
- Child development centres

9. LIST OF FUNDING (DONOR) ORGANIZATIONS

In 2024, the three-year project "Human Rights Protection and Strengthening Civil Society in the Regions of the Republic of Armenia, Phase 5" (E-ARM-2021-0172) was implemented, as well as the short-term projects N-ARM-3071 and N-ARM-3120.

However, the Organization has implemented numerous grant projects throughout the period of its human rights activities. Here is a list of the funding (donor) organizations with whose financial support various projects were implemented in different years:

- 1. U.S. Embassy in Armenia
- 2. Counterpart International
- 3. "NGO Centre" Civil Society Development Non-Governmental Organization
- 4. Eurasia Partnership Foundation
- 5. Open Society Foundations Armenia
- 6. International Organization for Migration
- 7. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- 8. Urban Institute
- 9. RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
- 10. World Learning
- 11. Danish Council for Refugees
- 12. OSCE Office in Yerevan
- 13. National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
- 14. British Embassy in Yerevan
- 15. World Bank
- 16. Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (CORDAID)
- 17. Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO)
- 18. The European Endowment for Democracy (EED)
- 19. Brot für die Welt.

10. INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUDIT FIRM

The organization is required to undergo a project audit when implementing grant projects. During 2024, the Organization also passed its regular project audit. The organization's project/financial audit was conducted by Baker Tilly Armenia CJSC, which operates on the basis of its company charter and the unlimited license for the provision of audit services No. NS 054 issued by the Ministry of Finance and Economy of the Republic of Armenia. The company submitted an Audit Conclusion in accordance with international standards.

In the period from September to December 2024, the donor Organization passed an institutional audit for the 2023 fiscal year, which was conducted by the audit company AHM Audit CJSC. "AHM Audit" CJSC was established on September 1, 2009, in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Armenia. The main registration number of "AHM Audit" CJSC is 1 20 0220. Since November 2013, "AHM Audit" CJSC has been a member of HLB International, a global network of independent audit firms and business consultants.

11. ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF

Meri Khachatryan, 1.

Director



Seyran Martirosyan,

Head of the 2.

Shirak branch,

iect Coordinator



Ruzanna Avagyan,
3.
Assistant to the Director



Ani Movsesyan,
4.
Accountant



5. Ofelya Galstyan, translator



6. Head of Gegharkunik branch

Lusine Toplaghaltsyan,



Nane Mnatsakanyan,

7. Head of Syunik branch



8. Assistant to the head of the Shirak branch

Armen Petrosyan,



Ruben Khachikyan,Gegharkunik branch

assistant to the head



Sona Alaverdyan,

10. Assistant to the head of the Syunik branch



Naira Avetisyan, 11. Lawyer, Yerevan



Victoria
Yeghoyan,

12.
lawyer, Shirak
branch



13. Agapi Manukyan, lawyer, Shirak branch



Manush Nalbandyan, 14. lawyer, Gegharkunik branch

Luiza Zakeyan,



Lilit Hayrapetyan, lawyer
15.
Syunik branch



Assistant,
16.
Shirak branch



12. ABBREVIATIONS

- 1. RA Republic of Armenia
- 2. RA Republic of Artsakh
- 3. NGO Public Organization
- 4. CSO Civil Society Organization
- 5. CSS Civil Society School
- 6. RAC Research-Analytical Centre
- 7. NA National Assembly
- 8. LSG Local Self-Government Body
- 9. USA United States of America
- 10. UN United Nations
- 11. UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees
- 12. OSCE Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
- 13. USS Unified Social Service

"The A.D. Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Protection Centre" NGO expresses its gratitude to the current donor, the German organization "Bread for the World", as well as to all previous donor organizations, which have enabled the Organization to carry out its activities, protecting human rights in the Republic of Armenia for more than three decades.