



Biannual Newsletter
January-June 2018

**Coalition to Stop
Violence against Women**

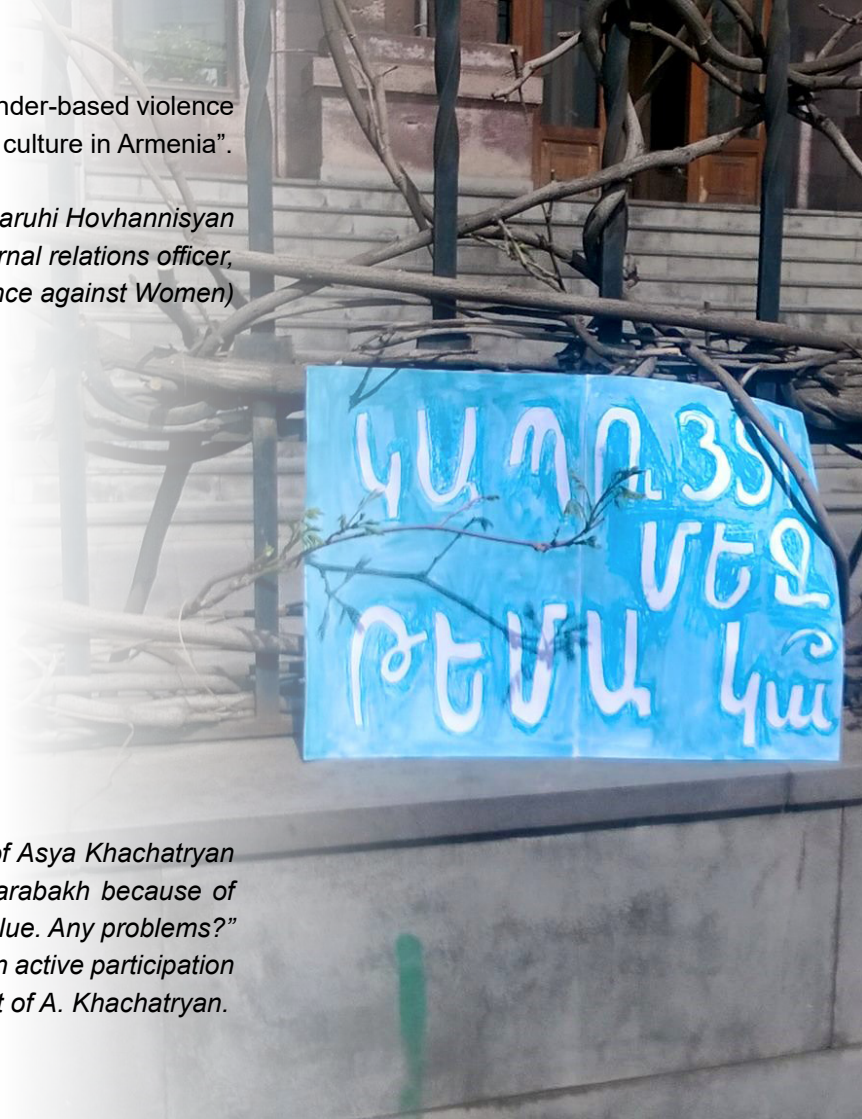
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**Coalition to Stop Violence against Women
Yerevan 2018**

“Day by day, we deal with institutionalized forms of gender-based violence that are being nourished and legitimized by dominant culture in Armenia”.

*Zaruhi Hovhannisyan
(Communications and external relations officer,
Coalition to Stop Violence against Women)*



The picture was taken during the protest in support of Asya Khachatryan who was subjected to police violence in Nagorno-Karabakh because of her blue hair and appearance. The poster says: “It’s blue. Any problems?” The Coalition to Stop Violence against Women took an active participation in the protest and came up with statements in support of A. Khachatryan.

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From 2010 to 2018: A Glance at the Past

Coalition to Stop Violence against Women (hereafter CSVW) was founded in 2010. Creation of the CSVW came as a response of several non-governmental organizations to the murder of Zaruhi Petrosyan, a 20-year-old woman who died as a result of severe beatings on the hands of her husband. Murder of Zaruhi was the trigger that brought to the public's attention the issue of violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence (DV) in particular: an issue that used to be silenced in Armenia for a very long time. From 2010 onwards CSVW became the main platform that united organizations with a focus on women's rights and gender issues in their fight against violence and discrimination against women and gender-based violence. Throughout the years, CSVW expanded, becoming more and more representative. It now unites 10 organizations:

- “Women's Support Center” NGO,
- “Women's Resource Center” NGO,
- “Sexual Assault Crisis Center” NGO,
- “Women's Rights Center” NGO,
- “Society Without Violence” NGO,
- “Public Information and Need of Knowledge” NGO,

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The poster says:
“What our silence can bring to.
Victim of domestic violence.
Zaruhi Petrosyan (1990-2010).
20-year-old.”

Զարուհի Պետրոսյան (1990 -2010)
20 տարեկան



“Real World, Real People” NGO,

“Agate” Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities NGO,

“Disability-Inclusive Development” (former “Disability Info”) NGO,

“Spitak Helsinki Group” Human Rights NGO.

Thus, member organizations of the Coalition represent interests of different groups of women, including LBT (lesbian, bisexual, transgender) women, rural women, women subjected to different forms of gender-based violence (GBV), women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS. Until now, CSVW not only strongly advocated for the adoption of necessary legislative and policy changes to tackle the issue of violence against women, but also led a persistent fight for eradication of deeply rooted gender stereotypes, sexist and misogynist narratives that are dominant in Armenia.

Each year member organizations of the Coalition jointly receive around 5000 calls on domestic violence and sexual violence through the organizations’ hotline services. The work of the Coalition and its members has been often endangered and challenged by different segments of the society, including nationalist groups and anti-gender movements. The previous government ruled by the Republican Party of Armenia, which used to be in power before the “Velvet” Revolution that took place in April 2018, lacked a political will to address and solve the issue of violence against women. As a result, domestic violence and femicide cases in Armenia have reached disturbing rates¹. Such a lack of political will to guarantee the right of every woman to live free from violence and discrimination was manifested in the long-term absence of legislative and policy mechanisms to tackle the issue. For members of CSVW, it took 10 years to advocate for the adoption of the legislation on prevention of domestic violence. The Coalition undertook huge advocacy

¹ For more information on the rates of VAW and cases of femicide in Armenia see the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of Human Rights Defender of Armenia, <http://www.ombuds.am/resources/ombudsman/uploads/files/publications/28731eccde752a30c70feae24a4a7de7.pdf>; 2017 Annual Report of the Office of Human Rights Defender of Armenia, <http://www.ombuds.am/resources/ombudsman/uploads/files/publications/59297c7b4276c9dbf19cd1f1cfc92a8.pdf>; CSVW Femicide report, 2016, http://coalitionagainstviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Femicide_Report_ENG.pdf

efforts during DV Law public hearings and adoption processes. CSVW experts and lawyers developed several packages of legal analysis, raising the issue of several problematic clauses and gaps in the law.

The legislation, modified and entitled as the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On the Prevention of Family Violence, Protection of Persons Subjected To Family Violence, And the Restoration of Family Cohesion”² was eventually adopted in December 2017 and got into force on 30 July 2018³. Even though the adoption of the law is a positive step forward, it remains quite inconsistent with the international legal standards on the protection of women against domestic violence and gender-based violence.

The report bellow indicates the main activities that have been undertaken by the Coalition from the period of January – June 2018, showing the main developments that took place in the first semester after the adoption of DV Law. Development of sub-legal acts under the Law, advocacy for bringing domestic legislation in line with the international standards, organization of campaigns against several vocal cases of institutional and domestic violence, court monitoring, capacity building of service providers, lawyers and media workers have been in the focus of CSVW’s activities since the beginning of the year.

² *Unofficial translation by the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women*

³ *See the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On the Prevention of Family Violence, Protection of Persons Subjected To Family Violence, And the Restoration of Family Cohesion,” <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docID=118672>*

Each year
5000

calls on
domestic
and
sexual
violence
cases



Legislation and Court Monitoring

Coalition's work for the adoption of appropriate legislation on prevention and punishment of domestic violence in line with international standards and Armenia's obligations under international human rights law gained a new pace in 2018.

Despite several controversial provisions, the adoption of DV Law is still an important step towards better protection of women's rights in Armenia. Starting from February 2018, the Coalition has been actively engaged in the development and review of sub-legal acts of the DV Law in cooperation with UNFPA Armenia. Involvement of CSVW in this process was of a significant importance to ensure that the regulations reflect the needs of women subjected to domestic violence.

Legislative and policy oriented activities of CSVW go beyond legislation on prevention of domestic violence. In our team we have come up with commentary on suggested changes in the Electoral code as well as on a number of other legal documents where gender perspective is practically absent. Among the main legislative priorities of CSVW this year is to push for the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)⁴, which was signed by the government of Armenia in early 2018.

Research on the gaps in the legislation and policy analysis is another important aspect of our work. In January the Coalition publicly presented its report on the assessment of the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women⁵. The Coalition also actively promoted its recent report entitled "Legalizing the stereotypes: women victims' access to justice and gender stereotyping in the framework of gender-based violence judicial

⁴ See the Istanbul Convention, <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>

⁵ See Research on law "On Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, CSVW, 2017, http://coalitionagainstviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/gelaw_report.pdf

proceedings”⁶. The reports drew a considerable attention of the media and the findings were widely circulated and discussed⁷.

Since the beginning of 2018 CSVW kept in focus monitoring of the cases of DV survivors Taguhi Mansuryan, Siranush Galoyan, Naira Smbatyan and Eva X.

⁶ See “Legalizing the stereotypes: women victims’ access to justice and gender stereotyping in the framework of gender-based violence judicial proceedings”, English summary, CSVW, 2017, <http://coalitionagainstviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/englishversion.pdf>

⁷ See the articles on the report presentation at “Aravot.am”, <https://www.aravot.am/2018/01/25/933180/>; <https://www.aravot.am/2018/01/25/933348/>; “Womennet.am”, <http://womennet.am/gender-equality-law/>



Photo caption:
“Adopt domestic
violence law.”

Advocacy and Activism

CSVW continues its advocacy efforts aimed to tackle the issue of domestic violence in Armenia through public campaigns that would target women, domestic violence survivors, public officials, youth and the public in large. As before, we prioritize the change of the discourse through multi-stakeholder cooperation and through activism and campaigning. The Coalition pursues collaboration with different media outlets in order to increase the public's awareness on DV and GBV and change societal perceptions around the topic.

Through its activism, from the beginning of the year the Coalition responded to several cases of institutional violence against women such as violence and sexual assault perpetuated against Marina Khachatryan and other female members of the political party "Yerkir Tsirani" in course of one of the sessions of the Council of Elders of Yerevan. The Coalition issued a public statement and co-initiated a public demonstration in front of Yerevan Municipality^{8, 9}. The case of Ruzanna Adanalyan, who was threatened by several institutions and individuals as she pursued a fair trial for her killed son, is another instance case we actively followed up.

CSVW also got actively involved in public protests demanding justice for Asya Khachatryan who was subjected to police violence in Nagorno Karabakh. To draw attention of the public and shape the discourse of institutional violence that target women, CSVW issued statements regarding the cases of violence and discrimination against Ruzanna Adanalyan, Asya Khachatryan, Marina Khachatryan and Hasmik Sargsyan¹⁰.

⁸ See the video footage of the protest, <https://youtu.be/7M7ewYV8O5g>

⁹ See the statement, <https://goo.gl/YF2PMq>;

¹⁰ See the statement for Ruzanna Adanalyan, <https://goo.gl/Fm8D3Q>
See the statement for Asya Khachatryan, <https://goo.gl/9CaYsV>

Finally, advocacy work of the Coalition could not bypass the recent major events that happened in April during Armenia's "Velvet" Revolution that led to the end of the rule of the Republican Party. In May, CSVW team organized a movement-building event during which each member was reflecting on her contribution in and impressions from the Revolution and recent political changes.



The poster says: "I got free from domestic violence".

Awareness Raising and Capacity Building

Creation of platforms for women subjected to gender-based violence to raise their voice and demand justice is among CSVW main priorities. Raising public's awareness about personal stories of these women is a powerful mean for combatting the dominant discourse in Armenia that is full of misogyny and is built around the concept of male domination.

During the first trimester of this year, CSVW produced 3 PSAs (public social ad) that greatly contributed to the dissemination of some key messages on prevention and punishment of the crime of domestic violence: "Siranush Galoyan: subjected to domestic violence throughout 16 years"¹¹; "Break the chain of violence, construct your bridge!"¹²; "Let's try to understand what family is"¹³. The first PSA that tells the life story of Siranush Galoyan, a DV survivor who is also a strong advocate for the rights of women subjected to domestic violence, got viral on Facebook. Videos became so popular in social media platforms that the CSVW team decided to negotiate with the Armenian Public TV to broadcast them across the whole country.

For CSVW it is important to see how women like Siranush become advocates and get to the frontlines of the fight against violence and discrimination against women. For this, empowerment of women survivors of domestic violence and their capacity building is crucial. In May, CSVW organized awareness-raising and empowerment training on domestic violence and DV legislation with 17 DV survivors. The event was built around discussions on DV phenomenon with its psychological implications, as well as the newly adopted DV Law and its protection and prevention mechanisms. At the same time, through this kind of capacity building activities CSVW creates a safe space for women where they can share

¹¹ See the video, <https://youtu.be/Ch64d8GPHQ8>

¹² See the video, <https://youtu.be/ilkPtpXFYdE>

¹³ See the video, https://youtu.be/r_N4AVQvCPY

their stories, fears and plans, forming some sort of a self-support group.

Capacity-building activities of our team since the beginning of the year also targeted media professionals, social workers and lawyers. In January-February CSVW organized trainings with 33 social workers¹⁴ and 15 lawyers¹⁵. Through an intensive work of psychologists, social workers, lawyers and attorneys of the member organizations of the Coalition the trainings contributed to the increased knowledge of respective professionals on domestic violence related issues, relevant legislation and protection mechanisms as well as built their skills on how to better work with domestic violence cases and apply the newly adopted DV Law.

To promote gender-sensitive coverage of DV cases a training on media coverage, domestic violence and DV legislation with 8 media experts was organized in June, during which the media experts discussed how women are portrayed in the media, how media often perpetuates double victimization and trauma towards women or justifies the perpetrators of violence.¹⁶

¹⁴ See an article about the training with social workers, <https://goo.gl/Nu4Gf9>

¹⁵ See an article about the training with lawyers, <https://goo.gl/qMnbVU>

¹⁶ See an article about the training with media professionals, <https://goo.gl/eTvnyj>



“When every single day of your life is the same that means that in your life you lived just a day. For 16 years I lived in that one day”.

Siranush Galoyan,
DV survivor

For the second half of this year the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women will continue its activities within abovementioned strategic directions. At the same time, the recent major political changes have created a new context for our work and advocacy. It is imperative that elimination of violence against women is seen as a precondition for building the “New Armenia”. Domestic violence, other forms of gender-based violence and discrimination against women should be put in the core of political agenda of the revolutionary government. For CSVW this is set as the primary advocacy goal.



CSVW Supporters in 2018:

Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

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“Harmonic Society” Armenian Association of Social Workers NGO

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Coalition to stop violence
against women



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