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<p>Is there a refugee protection program? Please describe it.</p>	<p>Armenia has a refugee protection program managed by the Migration Service of Armenia. You can apply for asylum in writing, orally, in sign language, or any other means of communication at the border crossing points, Police stations, the Migration Service, or penitentiary institutions. You have a right to apply for asylum even if you have entered Armenia illegally.¹</p>
<p>Who runs any available refugee protection program? Who determines which applicants qualify for refugee protection?</p>	<p>The Migration Service of Armenia runs and manages the refugee protection program. The application for asylum is considered within 3 (three months) after its submission. By the decision of the Ministry of Justice (“MoJ”), the term of consideration of the application may be extended for another 3 months. As a result of the discussion of the application, the MoJ will make a decision: (1) On recognizing a refugee in Armenia, providing asylum, or (2) to reject the asylum application. The decision is made on the basis of the information you provided during the interview in your personal case, as well as the information available about your country of origin. If necessary, the ICC may apply grounds for refusing to recognize or grant asylum to a refugee, including crimes against peace or humanity, war or other serious crimes, acts contrary to UN principles, such as arriving in a safe third country without fear of persecution (RA law Refugee Asylum, Article 11).</p> <p>If you have already been recognized by another refugee state (which acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of</p>

¹ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

	<p>Refugees), your application will be decided only on the granting or denial of asylum. You will be notified of the decision made by the MoJ within 3 three days. You can get the decision from MP or it will be sent to you by mail. ² If your application is upheld, the decision of the ICC is positive, you will be granted refugee status. As a newly recognized refugee, you can apply to the Department of Integration for integration into state integration programs. And if the MoJ rejects your claim, it means that you have been in the status of an irregular migrant in Armenia since the notification. If you do not appeal the rejection decision within 60 days, you are obliged to leave the country.</p> <p>The employee will interview you within 15 days of registering your application with the MP. You will be notified in advance of the time of day of the interview. You will be interviewed for information on why you left your country. You will be asked questions, you should answer them as exhaustively as possible in detail. You must be present at the interview, cooperate with the Service provide the correct information to the interviewer. If you do not appear for an interview or do not cooperate for a disrespectful reason, the consideration of your application will be terminated by the MoJ.</p>
<p>Is the refugee protection program functional? For example, how long does it take for decisions to be issued? What percentage of applications are granted?</p>	<p>The refugee protection program is functional. It takes approximately 3 months for a decision to be issued, however, the Ministry of Justice may decide to extend consideration of an application for another 3 months.³ In 2020, 191 refugees applied for asylum in Armenia, mostly from Iran, Syria, and Lebanon. Of the 191 applicants, 86 (or 59.7%) were granted</p>

² http://www.migration.am/from_asylum_application_to_status_granting_stage

³ http://www.migration.am/from_asylum_application_to_status_granting_stage

	<p>asylum.⁴</p>
<p>Do refugees have a right to work? A right to education? A right to medical care? Please describe.</p>	<p>Access to Basic Services: Many refugees are unable to work or receive an education while their cases worked their way through the legal system, despite legal provisions protecting these rights, due to a lack of job openings, difficulty in accessing opportunities, and language barriers.</p> <p>Housing allocated to refugees is in limited supply, in poor condition, and remained, along with employment, refugees’ greatest concern. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the close quarters in the refugee center (a housing facility where some asylum seekers were accommodated) also gave rise to fears of infection, although no COVID-19 cases were reported in the center during the year. Many displaced families rely on a rental subsidy program supported by UNHCR and diaspora organizations. Authorities operate an integration house with places for 29 refugees and offer refugees accommodation free of charge during the first months after they acquired refugee status. Language differences create barriers to employment, education, and access to services provided for by law.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 state of emergency, restrictions on internal movement and the closure of in-person services at government offices hampered access to basic services for individuals whose documents expired during this time. Although the government declared that expired documents would be considered valid until the end of the state of emergency, no instructions were issued to state authorities, including those responsible for medical care, social protection, and education, to accept the expired documents. Delayed access to services</p>

⁴ <https://www.worlddata.info/asia/armenia/asylum.php>

	<p>continued until the State Migration Service instructed duty officers to issue refugee certificates. Although refugees and asylum seekers were instructed to apply for support programs that the government created to assist persons during the state of emergency, many were found ineligible for technical and other reasons. Obtaining COVID-19 tests are reportedly problematic, with some individuals paying for their own tests while others did not receive their results and had to be retested. A total of 16 refugees (who lived in apartments, not the reception center) had tested positive as of August 10, 2020. Access to education for many refugees became difficult after the government suspended in-person education in March. Due to a lack of devices to access online programs, UNHCR provided 166 tablet computers to facilitate distance education throughout the year. Children are able to view educational programs on television.⁵</p>
<p>Are those seeking refugee protection free to live freely or forced to reside in camps?</p>	<p>Those seeking refugee protection are free to live freely. However, the Migration Service has dormitories at its disposal, and you can be provided with a room in one of them, if free rooms are available. The issue of providing you with a room in the dormitory is discussed and the room is allocated to you by the relevant working group coordinated by the Migration Service. The relevant application should be submitted to the Migration Service on working days: Monday to Friday, at 09:00-18:00 (break 13:00-14:00).⁶</p>
<p>Does a grant of refugee protection result in a pathway to permanent status? In other words, can a refugee eventually become a citizen? Is there another form of legal permanent status available for people with refugee status?</p>	<p>Refugees who are not ethnic Armenians may apply for facilitated naturalization, which requires passing a constitutional knowledge test. Such citizenship, however, was rarely granted.⁷</p>

⁵ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/armenia/>

⁶ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/assistance-for-refugees/>

⁷ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/armenia/>

<p>Does the country offer temporary protections available other than refugee status? If so, what are they?</p>	<p>It appears that Armenia does not offer temporary protections other than refugee/asylum status.</p>
<p>What, if any, penalties are there for people without status or people who are denied refugee protection?</p>	<p>You shall not be subjected to criminal or administrative liability for illegal entry or illegal stay in Armenia. However, the U.S. Department of State found that during 2020, seven foreigners seeking asylum were arrested for illegal entry after crossing the border by land or air. Despite a provision in the law exempting asylum seekers from criminal liability for illegal border crossing, authorities required them to remain in detention pending the outcome of their asylum applications or to serve the remainder of their sentences.⁸</p>
<p>What organizations exist in-country that can help displaced people seek available protections? What other organizations in the country may be able to help displaced people access services and rights, even if their mission is not to specifically work with refugees and displaced people?</p>	<p>1. The Public Defender’s Office⁹: Yerjan, Zakyan 2; Phone: (374 10) 60-07-04; Email: info@advocates.am;</p> <p>2. Human Rights Defender: Pushkin¹⁰ 56 a.; Phone: (374 10) 53-76-51; Email: ombuds@ombuds.am; URL:</p> <p>3. The A.D. Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Protection Center¹¹ Yerevan, 1 Sarmen Str., 4th floor, 375009, Armenia Tel: 37410- 542936 / 587864 / 561560 Fax: 37410- 561505 Email: sakhfd@arminco.com</p> <p>The A.D. Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Protection Center was created to support the building of civil society and the development of democratic institutions in the Republic of</p>

⁸ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/armenia/>

⁹ <http://www.advocates.am/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ombuds.am/>

¹¹ www.sakharovcenter.org

Armenia. They run regional offices in Shirak, Gegharkunik and Syunik as well as their headquarters in Yerevan. They are an implementing partner of UNHCR and provide free legal consulting on human rights protection issues to the socially vulnerable, including refugees and immigrants.

4. Foundation Against Violations of Law NGO¹²
Yerevan, 6 Arshakuniats St., 375023
Tel: 37410-568372; 37410-582819
Fax: 37410-582819
Email: info@favl.am

Foundation Against Violation of Law (FAVL) is a non-governmental non-profit human rights organisation founded in 1991. It uses treatment methods to provide help for the victims of torture, displaced persons, refugees, and the families of missing persons. FAVL provides training and consultations for physicians and nurses, police officers, agencies working with refugees, and asylum seekers at the local level. FAVL does research in communities, and in the army and prison. It has a number of publications.

5. Eurasia Partnership Foundation¹³
1/21 Azatutyan ave., apt. 23, Yerevan 0037
(374 10) 25 15 75
E-mail: Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, gtergabrielyan@epfound.am
Anush Margaryan, amargaryan@epfound.am

With 20 years of experience in program implementation and grant making for Armenian civil society, EPF positions itself as

¹² <http://www1.favl.am>

¹³ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/>

	<p>a ‘think and do’ tank, with expertise in the nexus of project design and management, network building and consortium management, civil society capacity building, policy research and advocacy, alternative content development and peace building. Human Rights programming of EPF is aimed at addressing major Human Rights issues in the country such as freedom of expression, religious tolerance, non-discrimination etc. Paradigm of Transformative Change lies at the core of EPF’s Human Rights Program: EPF works on changing the structural causes of intolerance, violence and discrimination, as well as the attitudes and behavior of actors. Thoughtful study of a problem, close cooperation with all counterparts and beneficiaries, looking for out-of-box solutions are some of the instruments EPF applies while designing and implementing projects. Since EPF is a think and do tank, it works full circle from research to policy advice and implementation. In particular, EPF, with Dutch support, recently developed a draft of Anti-Discrimination (Equality) Law for the Ministry of Justice, and works on changing social attitudes and discriminatory behaviors in anticipation of the adoption of the Law. When contacted and asked to prepare a report, EPF will require modest financial assistance to carry out the work</p>
<p>Is there other information that might be valuable for displaced people arriving in that country to know?</p>	<p>During the entire asylum application period (3 months, with the possibility of extension for up to 3 months), asylum seekers are accommodated in the Center for Temporary Accommodation of Asylum Seekers (Center). In case of impossibility of accommodation in the center, in order to cover the basic necessities of life, they are provided with financial assistance: 20,000 AMD (about \$ 40) to the asylum seeker (chief applicant) and 15,000 AMD (about \$ 30) to each member of his / her family. Asylum seekers not housed in the center are not provided with food or hygiene items. After being recognized as</p>

	<p>a refugee in the Republic of Armenia and receiving asylum, the asylum seeker residing in the Center is obliged to vacate the room, and in case of receiving financial assistance, the provision of assistance is terminated. Asylum seekers and refugees recognized in Armenia, if properly documented, have equal rights with foreign citizens legally residing in the Republic of Armenia as stateless persons, in particular, free legal aid, education, medical care, social security, employment, free movement and other rights. Asylum seekers (refugees) enjoy the same rights as citizens of the Republic of Armenia in connection with the acquisition, transfer and lease of real estate, as well as in other property relations. Refugees granted asylum in the Republic of Armenia enjoy the rights established for foreign citizens in legal relations related to the acquisition and privatization of real estate.¹⁴</p> <p>While the quality of procedures and decision making for determination of refugee status improved over the last decade, concerns remained regarding adjudication of cases of asylum seekers of certain religious and gender profiles with non-Apostolic Christian and non-Armenian backgrounds.¹⁵</p>
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¹⁴ http://www.migration.am/armenia_as_host_country

¹⁵ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/armenia/>

Armenian Refugee Program Overview:

Armenia has a refugee protection program managed by the Migration Service of Armenia. You can apply for asylum in writing, orally, in sign language, or any other means of communication at the border crossing points, Police stations, the Migration Service, or penitentiary institutions. You have a right to apply for asylum even if you have entered Armenia illegally. You can submit an asylum application to the Migration Service, if: (1) you have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or (2) owing to your life, safety, or freedom being threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights, or other circumstances, which have seriously disturbed public order.¹⁶

Your Rights as an Asylum-Seeker:

You shall not be subjected to criminal or administrative liability for illegal entry or illegal stay in Armenia.¹⁷ You shall not be expelled or extradited to a foreign state, if there is a real danger that you may be subjected to death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in that country. You have the right to stay in the Temporary Accommodation Centre for asylum-seekers, if there are available rooms. You have the right to interpretation and translation free of charge. You have the right to free legal aid for which you need to contact the Office of Public Defender. You have the right to apply to the Human Rights Defender, if you believe that your rights have been violated by the state, local self-governing bodies or officials, as well as organizations operating in the field of public service. Lastly, you have the right to contact the UNHCR Representation in Armenia and the International Organization for Migration.¹⁸

Where and How to Apply:

Border Crossings. You can apply for refugee status and asylum at the following border crossing points and airports in Armenia: (1) Bavra (Armenia-Georgia land border crossing point); (2) Bagratashen (Armenia-Georgia land border crossing point); (3) Meghri (Armenia-Iran land border crossing point); (4) Ayrum (Armenia-Georgia railway border crossing point); (5) Gogavan (Armenia-Georgia land border crossing point); (6) Zvartnots airport; (7) Shirak airport. If you have entered Armenia legally and are at

¹⁶ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

¹⁷ However, a U.S. Department of State Country Condition report on Armenia states that, “During the year, seven foreigners seeking asylum were arrested for illegal entry after crossing the border by land or air. Despite a provision in the law exempting asylum seekers from criminal liability for illegal border crossing, authorities required them to remain in detention pending the outcome of their asylum applications or to serve the remainder of their sentences.” “During the COVID-19 state of emergency, there were at least two cases in which individuals who sought asylum were turned away at the border crossing with Iran. As of year’s end, 12 asylum seekers were detained, including four from Iran and two from Azerbaijan.” <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/armenia/>

¹⁸ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

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any Armenian land or air border crossing point, you may inform border guards about your intention of submitting asylum application in Armenia. After registering your asylum request you will be explained how to get to the Migration Service office and submit asylum application. Border Guards will explain you the procedure of seeking asylum in Armenia, and rights and obligations of asylum-seekers. You will have the right to ask for a lawyer and request contact with UNHCR. If you are attempting to enter Armenia without a valid travel document or a valid entry permit and wish to seek asylum, the border guards may decide to keep you for up to 72 hours in the reception facility designed for foreign citizens at border crossing point making relevant clarifications as prescribed by the law. After registering your asylum application, you will be visited by the Migration Service staff. The officials of the Border Guards and the Migration Service will draw up an act based on which you will be entitled to enter the Republic of Armenia territory. In case of necessity, you and your family members will be transported from the border crossing point to the Migration Service office or the Reception Center.¹⁹

State of Emergency. The Human Rights Defender of Armenia has informed that a foreigner or a stateless person can apply for asylum in Armenia during the state of emergency. However, while entering the country you may undergo certain medical examinations and/or be put in quarantine for 14 days.²⁰

In Detention/Prison. You also have the right to apply for asylum in detention facility (prison), if there is a threat to your life and freedom in your country and you are in need of international protection. You need to submit your application for asylum to the administration of detention facility (prison). Your application will be transferred to the Migration Service for processing.²¹

In the Territory of Armenia. If you have entered the territory of Armenia, then you should visit the Migration Service (MS) of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure for submitting your asylum request. You must submit an asylum application form to the MS. In case of need, the staff member will assist you in filling the application. The application can be filled in Armenian, your mother language or any language of the UN (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish). If you seek asylum together with your family members, you can submit a unitary application filled by an adult member of your family. However, each family member can file an individual asylum application as well (separate from the unitary application). The following documents should be provided along with the asylum application: (a) A copy of your passport, copies of other identification documents, if available; (b) A copy of birth certificate (in case of minors), if available; (c) Documents in your possession, which in your opinion, can justify your claim; (d) 2 color photos (35x45mm).²²

Interview:²³

After registering your application at the Migration Service, an interview will be conducted with you. You will be informed

¹⁹ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

²⁰ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

²¹ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

²² <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/applying-for-asylum/>

²³ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/asylum-procedure/>

about the date and time of the interview in advance within three days after your application. The aim of the interview is to get information on the reasons of leaving your country. You will be asked questions and you should answer them in as comprehensive and detailed manner as possible. You are obliged to come to the interview, cooperate with the Migration Service and provide correct information to the interviewer. If you do not show up for the interview for no valid reason and do not cooperate with the Migration Service, then the processing of your application may be cancelled by the Migration Service. If your attendance is not possible or if you are late for a valid reason, please inform the Migration Service at least one day prior to the interview. Upon your request, you will be interviewed by an Migration Service official of your preferred gender. If you do not speak Armenian language, then the interview will be conducted with the participation of the interpreter of your preferred gender, provided by the Migration Service. Should you wish, you can have an interpreter of your own choice and on your own means with the consent of the Migration Service. The Migration Service will make the record of the interview. If you agree, a staff member of the UNHCR, as well as your lawyer from the Office of the Public Defender, or your personal lawyer may be present at the interview. If the Migration Service considers that your application is well-founded and there is sufficient information on the file to grant you a refugee status, then the decision may be taken without an interview. The interview is confidential. The information provided by you will not be communicated to the authorities of your country, including the Embassies, or any other person. Such information can be provided to other people only by your written permission. The confidentiality of the interview is guaranteed by the RA Law “On Personal Data Protection”; the information received from the interview is strictly confidential and shall not be published.

Your asylum claim may be reviewed in an accelerated manner, if: (1) Your asylum claim is unfounded, that is the grounds mentioned in it do not obviously meet the refugee recognition criteria or (2) Your asylum application has been once considered and rejected and you submitted a new asylum application. The accelerated procedure is processed within 10 working days. The application processing period may be extended up to one month based on the decision by the Migration Service. You have all the rights and obligations set out for asylum-seekers during accelerated procedure. The accelerated procedure of granting asylum shall not be applied to you, if you are an asylum-seeker with special needs. Persons with special needs are: (1) asylum-seeking or refugee children, (2) persons with disabilities, (3) pregnant women, (4) single parents with minor children, (5) persons with serious illnesses, (6) persons with mental health issues, (7) survivors of trafficking, torture, or other forms of violence.

Asylum-Seeker Identification Document:²⁴

Within three working days after submitting an asylum application, the Migration Service will issue an asylum-seeker Identification Document (ID card). This document confirms that you have applied for asylum in Armenia and your presence in the territory of Armenia is legal. The ID card provides you with the right of free movement within the entire territory of Armenia, exercising a number of rights and benefiting from a number of services. The asylum-seeker ID card will be issued to you for three months. If a decision with regard to your asylum application is not delivered by the Migration Service, the period of validity of the card will be extended for another three months. The period of validity of the card will be extended every time it expires for another

²⁴ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/asylum-seeker-identification-document/>

period up to three months until a final decision is made (including the end of the appeal procedure). In case of loss of the card, you should immediately apply to the Migration Service to be issued a new one. You should return your Asylum-seeker ID card to the Migration Service, if: (1) you have been granted asylum, (2) your asylum application is finally rejected, (3) you withdraw your asylum application, (4) you are leaving Armenia, (5) the asylum-seeker ID card is subject to be replaced by a new one.

Appealing the Migration Service Decision:²⁵

You have the right to appeal to the court (in court instances) against any negative decision made by the Migration Service regarding your asylum application. If you have appealed the Migration Service decision, before the court will make a final decision you are considered as an asylum-seeker and have the right to legally reside in the territory of Armenia, benefit from the available services and reside in the Reception Center. You will not be deported/ returned to your country of citizenship or country of permanent residence until there is a final decision. You have the right to receive legal aid for appealing the Migration Service decision to the court. For free legal aid you should apply to the Public Defender's Office of the Chamber of Advocates. For free legal aid you can also apply to UNHCR partner Mission Armenia NGO. You will be provided with a public defender, who will help you with the appeal procedure – give you free legal consultation, prepare a claim for submitting to the court and defend your interests in court instances (only in case you do not have sufficient means to cover the expenses of hiring a lawyer yourself and only if the Public Defender's Office or Mission Armenia NGO find that there are sufficient grounds for the appeal). If you have financial means, you may hire a lawyer on your own means by applying to the Chamber of Advocates of the Republic of Armenia or any lawyer's office. To appeal against the negative decision, it is necessary to submit the appeal to the Republic of Armenia Administrative court. The content of application should meet the requirements of the Republic of Armenia legislation; otherwise, the court will not admit it. For appealing a negative decision, it is recommended to apply to a lawyer who will assist you in the appeal procedure.

The appeal procedure is implemented by three court instances: (1) the Administrative Court [Address: 23, Garegin Nzhdeh Ave., Yerevan; Telephone: +37410 447 121 (appealing a negative decision on asylum application)]; (2) the Administrative Court of Appeals [Address: 3/9, Tbilisyan Ave., Yerevan; Telephone: +37410 201 195 (appealing decision to the Administrative Court of Appeals)]; and (3) the Court of Cassation [Civil and Administrative Chamber. Address: 5, Vazgen Sargsyan St., Yerevan; Telephone: +37410 511 735 (appealing decision to the Civil and Administrative Chamber of the Court of Cassation)]. There is no exact time frame defined for court to review your claim.

You may appeal the MS negative decision to the RA Administrative Court within 2 months after notification on the MS decision on your asylum application. If you do not apply to the court within this time period, the decision by the MS will be considered final. The period for launching an appeal may be renewed only if there are valid reasons for missing it. The reasons for missing the appeal period are considered to be valid, if they do not fall within the sphere of your influence. After the reasons for missing the appeal period disappear, you can submit an appeal to the court within 15 days, but no later than within three months starting from the day you got the notification about the decision on your asylum application. If you do not lodge the appeal within this

²⁵ <https://help.unhcr.org/armenia/seeking-asylum-in-armenia/appeal-rights/>

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period, the decision of the MS will be considered final.

Consequences of Asylum Refusal:

Voluntary Return. If your asylum application was rejected by the Migration Service and you did not appeal the negative decision, the decision of the Migration Service is considered to be final. You must voluntarily return to the country of your citizenship or permanent residence. If you appealed to the court against a negative decision and your asylum claim was rejected by the court in final instance, the decision is considered to be final. You must voluntarily return to the country of your citizenship or permanent residence. If you desire to repatriate voluntarily, you may apply to the Migration Service for the assistance with regard to your voluntary repatriation. You may apply for voluntary repatriation also during the discussion period of your asylum application. The Migration Service will assist you: (1) to get all available information on the situation in the country of your citizenship or permanent residence and (2) to receive necessary travel documents and visa for entering the country of origin or permanent residence or possible transit country.

Deportation. If you do not leave Armenia voluntarily within the prescribed deadline, your stay in Armenia will be considered illegal. The Migration Service will apply to the Police and it will ensure your deportation. Your deportation from Armenia will be implemented only based on court decision. You will not be deported from Armenia, if: (1) You have any type of residence permit providing the right to legally reside in the country (temporary, permanent and special). The temporary and permanent residence permits are granted by the Passport and Visa Department of the Police while the special residence permit is granted by a decree of the President of the Republic of Armenia, (2) You are a minor and your parents reside in Armenia legally, or (3) You have a minor under the lawful care or you are 80 and above years old. In such cases you may apply to the Passport and Visa Department of the Police to receive temporary residence permit in Armenia.

Services for Refugees:

Asylum seekers in Armenia have a number of other rights: free movement, employment, education, free legal advice, and free medical care. When exercising their rights, they must respect the legal interests, rights and freedoms of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, other persons, maintain public order, and the security of the Republic of Armenia. Asylum seekers are obliged to cooperate with the Migration Service, provide reliable and truthful information, pay all types of taxes and duties, as well as the citizens of Armenia. They are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Armenian legislation.

According to the U.S. Department of State, many refugees were unable to work or receive an education while their cases worked their way through the legal system, despite legal provisions protecting these rights, due to a lack of job openings, difficulty in accessing opportunities, and language barriers. Housing allocated to refugees was in limited supply, in poor condition, and remained, along with employment, refugees' greatest concern. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the close quarters in the refugee center (a housing facility where some asylum seekers were accommodated) also gave rise to fears of infection, although no COVID-19 cases were reported in the center during the year. Many displaced families relied on a rental subsidy program supported by UNHCR and

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diaspora organizations. Authorities operated an integration house with places for 29 refugees and offered refugees accommodation free of charge during the first months after they acquired refugee status. Language differences created barriers to employment, education, and access to services provided for by law. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, restrictions on internal movement and the closure of in-person services at government offices hampered access to basic services for individuals whose documents expired during this time.

Although the government declared that expired documents would be considered valid until the end of the state of emergency, no instructions were issued to state authorities, including those responsible for medical care, social protection, and education, to accept the expired documents. Delayed access to services continued until the State Migration Service instructed duty officers to issue refugee certificates. Although refugees and asylum seekers were instructed to apply for support programs that the government created to assist persons during the state of emergency, many were found ineligible for technical and other reasons. Obtaining COVID-19 tests was reportedly problematic, with some individuals paying for their own tests while others did not receive their results and had to be retested. A total of 16 refugees (who lived in apartments, not the reception center) had tested positive as of August 10, 2020. Access to education for many refugees became difficult after the government suspended in-person education in March. Due to a lack of devices to access online programs, UNHCR provided 166 tablet computers to facilitate distance education throughout the year. Children were able to view educational programs on television.²⁶

²⁶ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/armenia/>