

LEGAL AND JUDICIAL INFORMATION ON MIGRANT SMUGGLING

ARMENIA

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GENERAL INFORMATION ON MIGRATION



MAIN FIGURES AND TRENDS

On 16 December 2022, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted a legislative package establishing the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Within the framework of this reform, the Migration and Citizenship Service was created, incorporating the staff of the former Migration Service and the Visa and Passport Department of the Police. The centralisation of key migration-related institutions and functions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs aims to enhance the efficiency of migration management. Following recent structural reforms, the Migration and Citizenship Service has been separated from the Passport and Visa Department and currently operates as an independent specialised body in the field of migration and citizenship. The social functions currently performed by the Migration Service are expected to be transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the future.

Between 2018 and 2025, Armenia's migration landscape has evolved through several distinct phases. In 2018, for the first time since 2006, the balance of border crossings became positive, a trend that continued in 2019.

The year 2020 represented a crisis period due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the hostilities around Nagorno-Karabakh. The military conflict led to the displacement of over 91,000 people, most of whom were women and children. After the end of the military operations, by the end of 2021, around 80% of the displaced persons had returned to their permanent residences, except for the occupied areas. As of the end of 2022, 20,709 displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh continued to reside in Armenia.

Following the mass displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, more than 100,000 persons relocated to Armenia, with the vast majority still residing in the country. This situation has generated new and long-term challenges in the areas of social protection, housing, employment, and public services, as well as in migration management and risk assessment.

Due to international movement restrictions imposed in 2020, Armenia's migration balance became positive for the first time since independence. In 2022, migration flows increased significantly, driven by security, humanitarian, and economic factors arising from the Russian-Ukrainian war, a trend that continues to the present.

According to the Armenian Border Electronic Management Information System, the total flow of border crossings in 2022 doubled compared to 2021, with the net balance of entries and exits reaching approximately +39,000, compared to -44,000 in 2021.

In 2023, the overall border crossing balance again was negative, at approximately -35,000, indicating a temporary weakening of the positive migration trend following the high inflow of the previous year.

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At the same time, within the total border crossings in 2024, approximately 4.752 million people entered Armenia, while around 4.757 million people exited, resulting in a net balance of about -5,000—a decrease of roughly 85.7% in the negative balance compared to 2023.

According to official aggregated data for 2025, the overall border crossing balance reached an exceptional level of approximately +30,500, indicating a significant shift in migration dynamics. Compared to the negative balance recorded in 2024, this figure reflects a structural turning point in the dynamics of migration flows. The total volume of border crossings remained high, exceeding 9 million combined entries and exits.

Since January 1, 2022, Armenia has launched the “Electronic Work Permit System,” which leverages advanced software to enable employers to apply online for granting foreign nationals temporary residency for employment and to streamline migrants’ access to the labor market. In 2022, 10,909 applications were submitted through the system. Residence permits based on employment were granted to 7,739 citizens of Eurasian Economic Union member states, and certificates had been issued confirming legal residence in Armenia. Simultaneously, 2,468 foreign nationals from 92 countries applied for work permits and were granted temporary residence status, with the majority being citizens of Iran and India.

In 2022, the number of asylum seekers in Armenia nearly quadrupled compared to the previous four years. While approximately 200–260 persons applied annually between 2018 and 2021, in 2022 a total of 964 foreign nationals and 4 stateless persons applied for asylum. In the same year, 358 foreign nationals were recognised as refugees and granted asylum in Armenia. Approximately half of the asylum seekers were citizens of Ukraine, and around 60% of them were granted refugee status. A significant proportion of applicants were also citizens of Iraq and Iran.

According to UNHCR data, by the end of 2024 Armenia registered 140,260 refugees, 4,124 persons in refugee-like situations, and 981 asylum seekers. In 2024, 663 new asylum applications were submitted. In 2025, a continued high inflow of applications was recorded, particularly from border crossing points and detention facilities.

Regarding legal residence, during the first half of 2025, 1,815 temporary and 1,775 permanent residence permits were granted (a total of 3,590), indicating sustained high inflows of individuals relocating to Armenia and undergoing regularisation procedures.

Between 2018 and 2021, approximately 18,000 irregular migrants were identified in Armenia. During the same period, 1,819 foreigners were denied the right to stay, 66 were deprived of residence rights, and only 11 foreigners were deported. On average, around 4,500 foreigners were subject to administrative liability annually, while approximately 200 were subject to criminal liability.

In 2024–2025, cases related to illegal border crossings and crimes connected to irregular migration increased significantly. The number of illegal crossings involving forged documents reached 160 in 2024 and 211 in 2025, representing a 31.9% increase. Cases of organising illegal migration increased from 15 in 2024 to 32 in 2025, an increase of approximately 113%.

In 2024, 94 criminal cases involving 129 persons were referred to court, while in 2025 this increased to 148 cases involving 194 persons, reflecting a 57.4% increase in cases and a 50.4% increase in persons.

In 2024, 77 convictions were issued against 112 persons, and in 2025, 120 convictions against 155 persons.

Foreign nationals accounted for approximately 75% of convicted persons in 2024 (84 individuals) and 63.2% in 2025 (98 individuals), primarily citizens of India and Iran. Deportation as an additional penalty was applied to 45 persons in 2024 and 49 persons in 2025.



For the comparative assessment of the 2024–2025 indicators, data from 2022–2023 were used as a basis, which are presented in the country profile for 2023. The comparative analysis was applied to cases referred to court, convictions, and border crossings involving the use of forged documents, with qualitative explanations of the reasons for the changes.

The overall trend in the application of administrative liability increased during 2021–2024 (2022/2021: +4.0%, 2023/2022: +136.8%, 2024/2023: +49.4%), while in 2025, a decrease of -35.4% was recorded compared to 2024.

➤ MIGRATORY ROUTES

Armenia acts as both a destination and transit country for various migration flows. Entry into Armenia generally occurs legally, while violations predominantly concern unlawful stay in the country or attempts to travel illegally from Armenia to European countries.

Overall trends indicate that Armenia serves simultaneously as a destination country for lawful residence and employment and, in certain cases, as a transit route toward the EU and other states. Illegal schemes frequently involve elements of document fraud, including the use of forged or altered documents.

In 2018–2021, 38 criminal cases were initiated related to the organisation of irregular emigration. Within the framework of combating illegal migration and human trafficking, and with the aim of neutralizing fake job offers disseminated through the internet and social media and ensuring safe migration, the relevant services of the Police carry out continuous monitoring of the .am domain and the Armenian-language internet space in order to detect illegal content and respond operatively.

In 2024, approximately 4,800 irregular migrants were identified, while in 2025 this figure declined to around 3,100, reflecting improved control mechanisms.

The overall picture of cases in 2024–2025 shows that attempts of illegal transportation are predominantly characterized by document forgery (forged or altered passports, visas, and other travel documents). As a result of uncovering organized schemes, an increase in law enforcement response has been recorded, reflected in a rise in convictions.

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INSTITUTIONAL ORGANISATION

The fight against illegal migration in Armenia is carried out by specialised units, particularly the Division for Combating Illegal Migration of the General Department of Criminal Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Migration and Citizenship Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

At the practical level, coordination includes the collection of operational intelligence and risk analysis, the organization of investigations and procedural guidance/supervision, as well as the representation of the state prosecution in court. The growth in indicators recorded during 2024–2025 reflects the activation of interagency cooperation and the enhanced application of available instruments.

Other involved bodies include the National Security Service, investigative authorities (including the Investigative Committee), and the Prosecutor's Office, which provides procedural oversight and represents the state prosecution in court.



LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The fight against illegal migration and the illicit transportation of migrants is regulated by the Criminal Code and administrative legislation of the Republic of Armenia. The following main legal grounds are highlighted in this profile:

Criminal Code of the RA

Article 470. Organization of illegal migration

1. Arranging the entry of a foreign citizen or a stateless person into the Republic of Armenia, the stay in the Republic of Armenia or the transit (transportation) through the territory of the Republic of Armenia for profit, which was done in violation of the procedure established by the legislation for entry, stay or transit, or proper permission for entry, stay or transit by submitting a false document or false information to obtain

shall be punished by a fine in the amount of twenty to forty times, or short-term imprisonment for a maximum period of two months, or imprisonment for a period of one to four years.

2. Arranging a person's exit from the Republic of Armenia, entry to a foreign country, or stay in a foreign country for profit, which was done in violation of the procedure for exit, entry, or stay established by legislation, or by submitting a false document or false information to obtain a proper permit for exit, entry, or stay:

shall be punished by a fine in the amount of twenty to forty times, or short-term imprisonment for a maximum period of two months, or imprisonment for a period of one to four years.

3. The act provided for in part 1 or 2 of this article, which was performed:

- 1) with prior agreement by a group of persons,
 - 2) in conditions dangerous to human life or health or humiliating the honor and dignity of a person or
 - 3) using official or official powers or the influence caused by them,
- shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of four to eight years.



Article 469. Illegal crossing of the state border

1. Crossing the state border of the Republic of Armenia without a specified document or proper permit:

shall be punished by a fine in the amount of ten times to thirty times, or public works of one hundred to two hundred hours, or short-term imprisonment for a maximum period of two months, or imprisonment for a maximum period of three years.

2. Assisting or organizing the crossing of the state border of the Republic of Armenia by a person who has not reached the age of criminal responsibility or who is completely or partially deprived of the ability to realize the nature and significance of his act or to control his act as a result of having mental health problems:

shall be punished by a fine in the amount of twenty times to forty times, or public works for a period of one hundred fifty to two hundred and fifty hours, or short-term imprisonment for a period of one to two months, or imprisonment for a period of one to four years.

3. The act provided for in part 1 or 2 of this article, which was performed:

1) using violence or threatening to use violence or

2) with prior agreement by a group of persons:

shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of three to six years.

4. The act provided by part 1 or part 2 or part 3 of this article, committed by a criminal organization:

shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of four to eight years.

5. This article does not apply to a person affected by trafficking, as well as to an asylum seeker who, coming directly from the territory where his life or freedom was threatened, applies without delay to the competent authority and indicates the valid reason for his illegal entry.

Article 457. Forging documents, stamps, seals, forms, making or using forged documents, stamps, seals, forms

1. Certifying or reserving rights or exempting from duty or responsibility a legally significant fact issued by a state or local self-government body or their organization, commercial or other organization, individual entrepreneur, notary, auditor or other person authorized to draw up, issue or certify the authenticity of a document forging a document for the purpose of its use or realization by the forger himself or another person, or forging such a document or making a false stamp, seal or form for the same purpose, as well as using a forged document:

shall be punished by a fine in the maximum amount of twenty times, or public works for a period of eighty to one hundred and fifty hours, or short-term imprisonment for a maximum period of two months, or imprisonment for a maximum period of two years.

2. The act provided for in part 1 of this article, which was performed by a group of persons with prior agreement:

shall be punished by a fine in the amount of ten times to thirty times, or by public works for a period of one hundred to two hundred hours, or by short-term imprisonment for a period of one to two months, or by imprisonment for a period of one to three years.

1. This article does not apply to the asylum seeker who forged the document or used the forged document to enter the Republic of Armenia.

Code of Administrative Offenses of the RA

Article 201. Violation of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Foreigners" by foreigners, inviters and employers

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Residence by foreigners in the Republic of Armenia without a valid license or residence status or with invalid documents, as well as violating the order of transit traffic through the territory of the Republic of Armenia:

causes a fine in the amount of 50 to 100 times the minimum wage envisaged in the Republic of Armenia.

Violation of the obligation of the inviter of the foreigner to the Republic of Armenia to cover the costs of the invitee's stay, including his possible medical care and the costs of his departure from the Republic of Armenia:

results in a fine ranging from 50 to 100 times the minimum wage.

Signing an employment contract with a foreigner without a document certifying the status of temporary residence issued on the basis of point "b" of Article 15, Part 1 of the Law "On Foreigners", except for foreigners who have the right to work in the Republic of Armenia without such a document:

shall result in the imposition of a fine in the amount of fifty times prescribed minimum wage.

Signing an employment contract with a foreigner without using the unified electronic platform for the selection of foreign workers provided for by the Law on Foreigners, except for foreigners with the right to work without residence status:

shall result in the imposition of a fine in the amount of fifty times prescribed minimum wage.

Repeating the same violation within one year after the date of imposition of the fine provided for in parts 3 and 4 of this article:

causes a fine in the amount of one hundred times the established minimum wage.



JUDICIAL FRAMEWORK

The Prosecutor's Office ensures the conduct of criminal prosecution and the representation of the public prosecution before the courts. During the investigation phase, procedural tools are applied aimed at securing evidence, in particular, detecting forged documents, clarifying organized schemes, and assessing cross-border connections.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Within the scope of its functions, the Division for Combating Illegal Migration of the General Department of Criminal Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia cooperates with foreign law enforcement authorities through the National Central Bureau of Interpol. Cooperation with the embassies of foreign states is organised through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2024–2025, the exchange of information and the comparative analysis of practices within the framework of international cooperation were continued and further intensified. During professional meetings and workshops organised within the framework of the Council of Europe, practical issues related to combating illegal migration, the applicability of investigative and prosecutorial tools, as well as ways to improve inter-agency coordination were discussed.

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Cooperation with international partners (including through the Council of Europe, Interpol, and bilateral legal assistance mechanisms) is regarded as a key factor in detecting organised schemes, obtaining evidence, and reducing international transit-related risks.”



RELEVANT CASES

The following examples are presented as summary descriptions of significant cases uncovered in the Republic of Armenia.

Case 1

In the spring of 2022 the director of a sports federation operating in Yerevan promised to organize the departure of 9 RA citizens who are not members of the Federation to the USA during March-April for the purpose of further residence, demanding in the range of 1500 to 8000 USD depending on the period of validity of the visa. In order to organize the process of illegal migration, the director of the mentioned sports federation prepared fake employment contracts and false references in the name of the mentioned citizens on previous dates. Under the pretext of participating in the training camp to be held in Tampa, Florida, USA, from April 18 to 28, he prepared fake employment contracts and fake diplomas as if they were members of the federation along with other documents to obtain a US entry permit, which the latter were presented to the US Embassy in Armenia.

On April 6 2022 the granting of visas was refused to the aforementioned citizens to enter the USA and the organised illegal migration was not completed.

Regarding the apparent crime of organizing illegal migration, a criminal case was initiated under Article 329.1, Part 3, Clause 1 of the former Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, which was sent for investigation to the Main Investigation Department of the National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2022, the director of the "Diamond Tour" tourist agency operating in Yerevan, V.H. in the spring, for the amount of 21,400 US dollars, organized the transfer of the citizen S.M. and his family members to the Federal Republic of Germany through transit countries and confirmation of permanent residence. In particular, in order to organize the aforementioned, along with other documents, he provided to S.M and his wife with false documents certifying a legal fact, reserving rights and false statements of bank accounts on their name, which were also submitted to the Embassy of the Republic of Greece in the RA.

Having received visas to the Republic of Greece, S.M. along with his family, by with accompaniment of V. H., they were first transferred from Yerevan "Zvartnots" airport to Athens, then to Prague, and from there to the Federal Republic of Germany.

The appropriate report on the apparent crime of organizing illegal migration was sent to the General investigation department of the National Security Service of the RA, where the criminal proceedings were initiated in accordance with the features of Article 470, Part 3 of the Criminal Code of the RA.

In 2023 as a result of the measures taken, during the implementation of the operative data received in the General Department of the Criminal Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, factual data was obtained that the director of a tourist agency operating in Yerevan, R.M., for the sum of 2,500 Euros, tried to organize illegal migration of H.Kh. through the territory of the Republic of Lithuania to the Federal Republic of Germany by submitting false information on education and employment on behalf of the latter to the

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Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Republic of Armenia. The visa was refused and the organized illegal migration was not completed.

The appropriate report on the apparent crime of organizing illegal migration was sent to the General investigation department of the National Security Service of the RA, where the criminal proceedings were initiated in accordance with the features of Article 470, Part 3 of the Criminal Code of the RA.

In the summer of 2023, in the Republic of India, individuals identified as “John” and “Ashok”, in exchange for approximately 6,000,000 Indian rupees (equivalent to approximately AMD 27,690,000) per person, organised the illegal migration of 16 citizens of the Republic of India to the Schengen Area States as well as to the United States of America. The scheme envisaged obtaining temporary residence status in the Republic of Armenia and subsequently using that status as a means for onward migration.

For this purpose, between 30 June and 3 August 2023, the above-mentioned Indian nationals were sent to the Republic of Armenia. In Armenia, in accordance with a prior arrangement, they were met by another citizen of the Republic of India residing in Armenia and acting as a member of an organised criminal group, who undertook the process of securing temporary residence status in the Republic of Armenia for the said individuals.

Subsequently, members of the criminal group reached an agreement with the Rector and the Vice-Rector of the “Anania Shirakatsi” University of International Relations. The agreement envisaged the fictitious enrolment of the above-mentioned persons at the university for the formal purpose of study, in order to enable them to obtain temporary residence status in Armenia on educational grounds and thereby facilitate their illegal migration to Schengen Area States and the United States of America. This involved the submission of false information concerning their studies in order to organise their stay in Armenia.

As a result, the Vice-Rector of the “Anania Shirakatsi” University of International Relations, acting for profit, demanded and received a total of USD 19,750 from the above-mentioned Indian nationals in exchange for their fictitious enrolment, calculated at USD 1,250 per applicant as a purported one-year tuition fee. Thereafter, the Rector of the university submitted documents containing false information regarding the enrolment of the above-mentioned 16 Indian citizens to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, requesting that the Passport and Visa Department of the Migration and Citizenship Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs grant the said persons temporary residence permits in Armenia on the basis of studies.