

# VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY IN ARMENIA:

## CASE OF GRETA BAGHDASARYAN

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



*I didn't know laws, at the age of 18 I left Yerevan and lived in the village for 12 years in isolation and when I moved back to Yerevan I didn't know who to turn to. My neighbours saw my bruises but who will listen to them now? It never occurred to me that I could turn to the police. Besides, I would have been afraid of the consequences of complaining. Now I am afraid of no one as I have nothing to lose... I want to complain. But now years have passed. I didn't turn to the police in the beginning and only went to the doctor. I still want to [open the case] and I want to bring him to justice for what he has done to me. But can I prove now that he was the perpetrator? I have medical evidence about the injuries. If I can prove it, I won't hesitate to do so...*

Greta Baghdasaryan, July 2008

Born in the Armenian capital Yerevan, Greta Baghdasaryan first met her future husband in 1986. She said that in 1989 he raped her and she became pregnant. In order to keep the pregnancy and child private, he took her to his parents' house in Aragatsotn region and they subsequently married in 1990.

Beatings, rape and other forms of abuse became routine in Greta's marriage. In an interview with Amnesty International she recalled that during her pregnancy he forced her to walk a long distance without water beating her with a branch "like a cow." She said that she suffered a miscarriage on account of these beatings. She eventually left her husband in January 2001 when he beat her severely with a shovel, breaking her nose and giving her a concussion. Her neighbour dissuaded her from calling the police and she returned to Yerevan where her parents lived. She went to a doctor, who took evidence but did not report the case to the police. Greta Baghdasaryan has been left disabled by her experiences and cannot work or provide for her children.

She has gained confidence in herself and awareness of her rights and does not want to stay silent about her experiences. She is also willing to bring her abuser to justice, although her current lawyer from the Armenian non-governmental organization, the A.D. Sakharov Centre of Human Rights Protection, considers that under a statute of limitations law she would be unable to pursue a criminal case. Reportedly, her medical records certifying injuries are not admissible in court proceedings.

She and her children no longer have access to their family house that was built with the aid of her father while she and her husband lived together. After she formally divorced her husband in 2002, she discovered that her former husband had removed both of her sons' names from the local

Photo: Greta Baghdasaryan © Amnesty International

residency register in their absence. The absence of local residency registration results in the violation of certain of her sons' citizenship rights, including the right to vote, and it also impedes their access to education, health and social protection. Greta Baghdasaryan also applied to the local court to claim her share of the property, and to have her sons' names reinstated in the local residency register. Three applications were rejected by the regional court in Ashtarak. Greta Baghdasaryan believes she was discriminated against during all court proceedings in the local court because of her being branded as an 'outsider' by relatives and friends of her husband in the local administration.

Amnesty International is concerned about the apparent discrimination against survivor of domestic and sexual violence Greta Baghdasaryan, and the lack of fair administration of justice in her case. Amnesty International is urging the relevant authorities of Armenia to investigate what happened in her case and ensure that she is given access to full reparation, including compensation and psycho-social and medical rehabilitation.

## **HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

**Please write letters to the relevant officials in Armenia making the following points:**

- Express concern at the apparent discrimination against survivor of domestic and sexual violence Greta Baghdasaryan in the case regarding the division of marital property, and the lack of fair administration of justice in her case, resulting in the loss of adequate housing as well as her and her children's rights to property, and requesting an investigation into her case.
- Express concern about the disability allegedly inflicted by the perpetrator on Greta Baghdasaryan, resulting in her unemployment, requesting that the authorities ensure that she and her children have immediate access to adequate social support and housing.
- Urge the authorities to ensure that Greta Baghdasaryan and all women who have been subjected to violence are given access to full reparation, including compensation, psycho-social and medical rehabilitation as specified by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in their General Recommendation 19, and by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers in their Recommendation Rec (2002) 5.
- Urge the authorities to ensure that Greta Baghdasaryan's children's citizenship rights are restored in full, including through the restoration of their names to the residency register of their choices.
- Express concern that thousands of women in Armenia are regularly subjected to violence within their families which is a serious breach of their human rights.
- Urge the authorities to prioritize the elimination of domestic violence and compliance with Armenia's obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

**Please send appeals to:**

- 1) Prime Minister Tigran SARGSYAN, Government Building 1, Republic Square, Yerevan 0010, Armenia
- 2) General Prosecutor Agvan HOVSEPYAN, 5 V. Sargsyan Street, Yerevan 0010, Armenia

**Copies to:**

- 1) Village Mayor Hrach Avagyan, village of Byurakan, Aragatsotn region, Armenia
- 2) Marzpet (head of the regional administration) G. Gyoalyan, Aragatsotn region, Armenia