

Former Lobbyist Discusses Azerbaijan's New Law on Trafficking

Yuliya Gureyeva, National VAW Monitor for Azerbaijan, interviews Maryam Haji-Ismayilova, a former lobbyist on trafficking issues in one of the international organizations present in Azerbaijan, on Azerbaijan's new trafficking law.

1. Do you think that the newly adopted Law will be important tool in combating trafficking in Azerbaijan? Why? What difference will it make?

Yes, definitely. Legal basis is the prime tool in combating any crime and trafficking in persons is not an exception. The Law starts with definition that makes clear the distinction between trafficking in persons and smuggling or irregular migration. Before, trafficking in persons was frequently incorrectly interpreted and understood by some government, non-government and media representatives. Now this problem will be solved. Another important outcome of the Law will be control and coordination of actions taken by all stakeholders.

2. What are the main features of the Law?

The Law presents General provisions, including definition, goals and basic principles in combating trafficking in persons; Organizational basis for combating trafficking in persons that are NAP, National Coordinator, specialized police unit, responsibilities of Government and cooperation with NGOs; prevention, social rehabilitation and protection of victims, which include provision on shelter; Specificity of the cases related to trafficking in persons, and liability for this crime and international cooperation.

3. Could you please tell us about drafting and lobbying processes? What were the main constraints you had faced?

A lot of parties were involved in drafting and lobbying process, but mainly President's Office, National Coordinator, Embassy of the United States, OSCE and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). International models and expertise were used while drafting the Law. After joint consultations and changes the draft was sent to the Parliament for revision and adoption. In general, we can say that the Law was passed in a short period of time comparing it to the practice of other CIS and even European countries.

4. Do you think that now Azerbaijan has enough mechanisms to combat trafficking? What else must be done in this direction?

Law, although extremely important, was only the first step. The next step to be made is to amend Criminal Code and include necessary articles that penalize traffickers. Currently such articles don't exist. The second is to train staff of CT Unit, police, border guards, judiciaries, prosecutors, lawyers and local NGOs. In one word all those, who will be involved in combating trafficking. Next is to open

secure accommodation and hot-line and provide full protection and rehabilitation to victims. In parallel, information campaigns shall be conducted to raise public awareness on risks and terrible consequences of trafficking.

For the Azerbaijan country page, see <http://www.stopvaw.org/Azerbaijan.html>.