**Response to joint questionnaire of special procedures**

**Protection of various groups at risk and indigenous peoples**

Taking into consideration the spread of COVID-19 in the country, the Armenian Government declared one-month state of emergency that went into force on March 16, 2020 at 5 p.m. local time accompanied by restrictions on movement, as well as restrictions on certain economic activities aimed at preventing spread of COVID-19[[1]](#footnote-1). Having visitations and sending packages to the centres providing social services to older people, old age homes, mental health care centres and other institutionalized facilities have been prohibited before declaring the state of emergency in Armenia. The operation of soup kitchens has been suspended and the Government applied to the local authorities, non-governmental organizations and volunteers to support the Government in the provision and in-home delivery of food to the older people, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in Armenia. In-home delivery of pensions and state family benefits to older people and other vulnerable groups without delays has been organized, as well. Provision of home care services to seniors are being continued strictly following safety and security measures against COVID-19.

On 13 April, the RA Government extended the state of emergency for an additional 30 days until May 14 at 5 p.m.[[2]](#footnote-2). People were required to self-isolate and leave their homes only in three exceptional cases[[3]](#footnote-3). Restrictive measures are always accompanied by other preventive measures, as long as the country has not flattened the coronavirus curve.

On 12 June, the Government extended the state of emergency for an additional 30 days until July 13 at 5 p.m[[4]](#footnote-4).

Based on the Government’s decision starting from 4 June wearing a mask is a must for everyone in open public areas including in transport, taxi, restaurants, cafes, etc[[5]](#footnote-5).

During the first stage, the Government worked extensively to quarantine infected or potentially infected people, and restrict the movement of those who returned to Armenia from highly affected countries. The second stage included declaring restrictions on certain economic activities and introducing fines for violations during the state of emergency, introducing restrictions on self-isolation. The stricter restrictions that were introduced during this stage have been quite effective: peoples’ movement during rush hours (5 p.m. to 8 p.m.) has decreased by over 40% after stricter measures were introduced. Before these stricter restrictions were introduced, peoples' movement decreased by 25% only. Armenia changed its strategy to cope with COVID-19 situation in mid-May and the decision was made to no longer hospitalize asymptomatic or mildly-symptomatic COVID-19 patients. According to the latest regulations, patients whose temperature is below 38 degrees Celsius and blood oxygen saturation is over 93% are not hospitalized and should receive the necessary treatment at polyclinics.

The RA Commandant in charge of the state of emergency measures amid the COVID19 situation, has asked grocery stores and supermarkets to have separated hours during the day (10:00-12:00) for senior citizens only, and to call on citizens of other ages not to go shopping during that time[[6]](#footnote-6). According to a decision by the Special Commission, starting on June 4, all pension payments and state support benefits will be distributed to citizens exclusively by employees of HayPost CJSC (the national postal service), who will be accompanied by police officers. The decision aims to ensure the safety of the elderly and beneficiaries of state support by reducing their likelihood of being infected as a result of crowding.

Sanitary - epidemiological and safety rules have been developed including for long-term care facilities[[7]](#footnote-7)․

According to the RA Commandant’s instruction employers are required to provide flexible working conditions for people over 60 years of age and / or people with cardiovascular, respiratory, diabetes or other chronic diseases to reduce the number of people being in the workplace at the same time. In this context, the government called on employers to organize the work of the elderly employees from home in all possible cases[[8]](#footnote-8).

The RA Government has approved a range of assistance packages to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the new coronavirus providing socially insecure, socially vulnerable groups, including the elderly, with social security and supporting their families.

The Government has also launched covid19.gov.am platform, where updated information about coronavirus developments, decisions by the Special Commission, and travel restrictions are regularly being posted. A mobile app has been launched that allows citizens to contact health authorities and by answering some questions get a preliminary assessment of their health status online. In addition, the RA Government on daily basis disseminates information on preventive measures of the COVID-19, wearing personal protection means, washing hands, etc.

**Questions by the Independent Expert on the human rights of older persons**

***Please provide information how and how many older persons called for assistance, help or made official complaints during the pandemic***

More than 350 older persons have applied to Mission Armenia for support during the state of emergency conditioned by COVID-19, 166 of which have been provided with food packages. Mission Armenia has not received any complaint during the pandemic.

***Please provide information on reports, speeches and measures which had a special focus on older persons during the pandemic. Please include best and bad practices***

During the COVID-19 related emergency situation, speeches have been made by various political and public figures calling to secure the health of the older people and to protect them from COVID-19 by strictly following safety and security measures.

An example from the speech of Mr. Pashinyan, the Prime Minister of Armenia is as follows: “In the meantime, international experience has shown that a coronavirus-infected patient may have no symptoms at all. That is, a person may be infected without suffering from respiratory problems or fever. In such cases, it is very likely that a person may even be unaware that he or she is infected and will be cured without any intervention, and therefore the disease will not pose any danger to him.

The problem is, however, that during this time they can infect many friends, relatives, family members. For many of them, the disease will not pose a serious risk either. World experience has shown that the virus is fairly safe for children, young people, and its main victims are those over the age of 70, as well as those with chronic pathologies.

And therefore, the main task is to protect our unhealthy compatriots, our parents, grandparents, and do everything to prevent them from contracting infection.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

The important measure taken by the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to organize the care of about 100 elderly persons infected with the coronavirus at the place of their isolation is an example of good practice with a special focus on older persons during the pandemic[[10]](#footnote-10).

The telephone numbers of the responsible persons from the organizations providing services to the elderly have been published by the initiative of the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

1. <https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/33564/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/33807/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1) To go to the supermarket (or local grocery store); the pharmacy; to attend a funeral or take care of someone else;

   2) To do physical exercise/activities in their neighbourhood;

   3) To go to work, if a person works for a business/organization whose activities have not been temporarily suspended by law. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/34188/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [https://www.gov.am/files/docs/4086.pdf](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.am%2Ffiles%2Fdocs%2F4086.pdf%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0Wu7iMmgFIOkwqNQfOn7S_Qy8l4ZA8i8iS4K0szYUeOFi8q2EibRZjULg&h=AT2wGdvyL-AoUH7VoSI3XVVgqiDCzbQ42XNa153Txhh6PrNnh2EEmDnvnIAWgqk4bCrqrg-BYHHEjs13r2frTvKMPBVktz-_pG8TzcBJfVCmFXhw0LArvhTLLDyhID7Oypfx&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT389wWrzFBI86LeRD0uEiGNlYj5GRsajYkR7BAOL0jPLhq70hhacHNyz3tQEfcZMKP8FGt9KWXODfltziSDtvDQWfDleuMUd8TxlmjsQAREqzyUwzEJ6OsKFRH1ydix6g_ewhUzaKRos_cxuD5xGTXTiXKzVvX8bwbraGQCNA1EEi8c6RRoVLCq) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.facebook.com/tigran.avinyan/posts/2439774802993592> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [https://www.gov.am/files/docs/4086.pdf](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.am%2Ffiles%2Fdocs%2F4086.pdf%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR2Oe5uw_ZGpU2Ci0F1y3AqiP1rlg6I44G4yB_GQ51xC5VXPvt6p38zo_hI&h=AT16TlJhMNGBpHvGuHnGK-eq3QMtvviwzWG6e8vTtUM0uDzHAa_RyJVUbR_X3t2rMzPm8AY3JqLtr0qcKr58cn5o6RNZsOZLkXtrGOpMGt6TV15L31TXBbPz3bgJSNSrwLld&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT2ir2de5uBfR3LXiZZCcKgz4IEF_CdNVTWdklM_vyYYJshNG7pMZxaNxt2bzK81cdNyKNfkhRZ32KdaFrkOE9H8AtczbjhmGe5laeDE5SSQ_Tz9OC1hSZBuirq8iL_CW0ycRlEReCcCbVvTf2btTFxV5NOpeEmT6I2NDhaGzI0ovzkDFU4gW_J-) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3971.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2020/03/24/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.facebook.com/mlsa.am/posts/2902590659853615> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)