



**THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN (OMBUDSMAN)**

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman)
on the protection of human rights in the country**

Baku - 2026



The 2025 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan was prepared in accordance with Article 14 of the Constitutional Law on the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Ombudsman presents the annual report to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan within two months until the end of the calendar year and subsequently speaks with that report before the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The annual report is submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, and Prosecutor-General of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The report is published in the newspaper “Azerbaijan,” along with the “Legislative Compilation of the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

FOREWORD

A number of significant processes, grounded in important socio-political, social, and institutional reforms distinguished the year 2025 in our country. The rapid development of information technologies and modern challenges, including global and regional realities, comprehensive measures were implemented to strengthen international relations, modernize and improve public administration, enhance social welfare, and ensure sustainable development.

The deepening of legal reforms and the effective organization of digital transformation have created new institutional opportunities for the protection of human rights in the country.

Systematic measures have significantly contributed to improving the activities of state institutions in line with modern requirements to increasing transparency, establishing prompt and flexible decision-making mechanisms, strengthening trust in state-citizen relations, and expanding opportunities for public oversight.

The penetration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence into all spheres of public life, including public administration, has brought new challenges to the forefront in terms of the protection of human rights and freedoms. In this context, ensuring the ethical, transparent, and responsible use of AI, safeguarding personal data, assessing the legal implications of algorithmic decision-making, and strengthening legal oversight mechanisms have been identified as key priority areas. In this regard, the “Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2025-2028,” which envisages the formation of a national AI policy, the designation of responsible public authorities in this field, the expansion of public-private partnerships, and the implementation of other innovative solutions, is of particular importance.

Ongoing measures aimed at improving the legal system in the country, aligning national legislation with international human rights standards, and developing and applying a unified judicial practice have created a favorable foundation for the more effective promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms.

Comprehensive measures implemented to strengthen the principles of the social state, promote the development of a socially oriented market economy, and ensure the effective implementation of programs and projects aimed at the social protection of vulnerable groups have contributed to the sustainability of socio-economic processes and enhanced the effectiveness of social protection mechanisms. This, in turn, has made a significant contribution to the protection of human rights and freedoms, the more effective safeguarding of the rights of vulnerable population groups, and the improvement of citizens’ overall well-being.

The recovery and reintegration processes carried out in the post-conflict period have been of particular importance in ensuring human rights. Within the framework of the “First State Program on the Great Return to the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan liberated from occupation”, measures undertaken to clear territories of mines and unexploded ordnance, implement large-scale modern infrastructure projects, restore economic activity, and ensure access to social services have enabled our compatriots, who were displaced from their native lands for more than 30 years to return safely and with dignity to their homes, thereby facilitating the restoration of their violated fundamental rights.

Pursuant to the relevant Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the declaration of 2025 as the “Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty” on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the 5th anniversary of our victory in the Patriotic War has carried not only symbolic significance but also strategic importance. This initiative has contributed to strengthening the traditions of statehood, advancing the construction of a rule-of-law state to a new stage, further enhancing the country’s international standing, and promoting the values of sovereignty.

This initiative has also created a favorable foundation for the consistent advancement of Azerbaijan’s regional peace and security agenda, while the factors of political and legal stability and strengthened sovereignty have been among the key drivers enabling the transition of the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia to a new stage.

The initialing of the agreed text of the “Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia” by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the parties, as well as the signing of the Joint Declaration on 8 August 2025 in Washington, D.C., United States of America, have created a solid foundation for ending a conflict that had led to prolonged violations of human rights, establishing peace and stability in the region, expanding interstate relations, including economic cooperation, and developing transport and communication links.

Thus, as a result of a successfully implemented foreign policy, our country has become an active participant in initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, and humanitarian cooperation at both regional and global levels. The demonstrated political will to ensure the protection of human rights in accordance with international standards and to expand cooperation with international organizations has once again reaffirmed our state’s commitment to humanistic values.

The development of relations with Turkic-speaking countries has constituted one of the priority directions of our State’s foreign policy. This cooperation has contributed to deepening economic integration within the Turkic world, strengthening collaboration among our friendly and brotherly countries in the fields of energy and transport, and promoting the sustainable development of our region.

The 12th Summit Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Organization of Turkic States (hereinafter - OTS), held on 7 October 2025 in the city of Gabala, marked the beginning of a new phase of cooperation in the political, economic, and security spheres within the Turkic world. The event, held under the theme “Regional Peace and Security”, concluded with the adoption of the Gabala Declaration, which set out key objectives such as strengthening the geopolitical positions of member states, accelerating transport and logistics projects, deepening economic cooperation, and developing a coordinated security policy. The additional support provided by Azerbaijan to the organization, along with the joint messages delivered by the Heads of State, served as clear evidence that the OTS has evolved beyond a platform for cooperation into one of the significant geopolitical centers.

Alongside the aforementioned developments, the international events of significant socio-political importance held throughout the year in our country, particularly in the capital city of Baku, have played an important role in further strengthening our country’s reputation, positive image, and standing in the international arena.

The initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, to declare an amnesty on the occasion of the “Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty” has become a clear example of the consistent and systematic continuation of the State’s policy of humanism. This initiative, grounded in the principles of the rule of law and universal values, also serves as an indicator of a policy based on justice and humanity, further strengthening our country’s international standing. Implemented at a historic stage marked by the full restoration of the country’s sovereignty and the effective enforcement of the supreme legal force of the Constitution throughout the entire territory, this initiative has demonstrated the strength and legal maturity of the State.

The significant achievements attained at the global and regional levels, as well as contemporary trends and challenges, have created a favorable foundation for further improving the activities of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter - the Ombudsman) in ensuring human rights and freedoms, as well as for strengthening the institutional capacity of the Office.

In 2025, within the framework of the powers defined by the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (hereinafter - the Constitutional Law), the Ombudsman continued to carry out multifaceted activities aimed at the protection of human rights and freedoms, the prevention of violations, and the promotion and advocacy of human rights. These activities were implemented in cooperation with state institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), media entities, communities, and international organizations.

In 2025, a total of 42,685 applications were received by the Ombudsman. During the year, the Ombudsman, the Office, and its regional centers received a total of 9,060 individuals.

These appeals were submitted via postal and electronic mail, through the online application channels (“Direct Application” and “Information Request”) available on the Ombudsman’s official website, as well as through the “E-gov” portal and official social media accounts. They were also received during in-person receptions held at the Ombudsman Office and regional centers, as well as during meetings of the Ombudsman and staff of the Office and regional centers with various population groups in cities and districts across the country, including during visits and monitoring activities.

During the year, a total of 14,718 calls were received by the Ombudsman’s “916” Call Center, which operates 24/7.

The appeals were reviewed in accordance with the Constitutional Law, and issues were raised before the relevant authorities in the manner prescribed by legislation. Investigations were conducted, and proposals and recommendations were put forward. In many cases, shortcomings and difficulties were resolved, and the restoration of violated rights was achieved, with applicants duly informed of the outcomes.

With regard to matters falling outside the Ombudsman’s mandate, applicants were provided, both during in-person receptions and through official correspondence, with legal advice, as well as explanations on the forms and methods of protecting human rights and freedoms, including guidance on applications to the relevant authorities in various cases.

During the year, analyses were conducted of the implementation of the normative legal acts in force, as well as of state programs, strategies, national action plans, and concepts in the field of human rights. Based on these analyses, opinions and recommendations were prepared and submitted to the relevant authorities.

Throughout the year, particular attention was paid by the Ombudsman to the rights of vulnerable population groups, and the problems they faced were thoroughly examined. Within the framework of the Ombudsman’s Independent Monitoring Mechanism function, systematic monitoring activities were carried out concerning the rights of children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), as well as issues related to their rehabilitation and inclusion, the ensuring of the right to equality, and the prevention of discrimination. Relevant reports were prepared and made publicly available.

In order to verify and assess the conditions related to the protection of the rights to liberty, security of person, protection of honor and dignity, and other rights, as well as to ensure the implementation of measures in accordance with the law, regular visits were continued to places where persons cannot leave of their own free will, including on the basis of received applications.

In addition to the above, throughout the year, continuous awareness-raising activities were carried out both at the central and regional levels to enhance the level of knowledge of the public, as well as state institutions, in the field of human rights and freedoms. Furthermore, mechanisms for cooperation with civil society institutions were further improved, and collaboration with the media was strengthened.

In connection with the declaration of the “Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty” in the country, as well as on the eve of 18 June - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan, a series of events were organized across the cities and districts of the country within the framework of the “Human Rights Month” announced by the Ombudsman, and the “Child Rights Month” dedicated to the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These events were held with the participation of central and local executive authorities, civil society institutions, and media representatives. Competitions and exhibitions were organized in secondary schools and children’s institutions, television and radio programs dedicated to human rights were broadcast, and articles and informational materials were published in the press.

Special importance was also attached to strengthening international cooperation in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. It should be noted that the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan is actively participating in the activities of international and regional associations and networks of national human rights institutions, while also being represented at a high level in their governing bodies.

Throughout the year, cooperation was strengthened with the Ombudsman Association of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC OA), the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), the Association of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions of the Turkic States (TÜRKOMB), the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC), as well as with other international and regional organizations, and with ombudsman institutions and national human rights institutions of foreign countries. This cooperation has created favorable conditions for the application of advanced international practices in our country, contributing to the strengthening of institutional capacity in the field of human rights and freedoms protection, the promotion of our positive experience on global platforms, and, ultimately, to the further enhancement of the position and reputation of our country in the international arena.

Safeguarding and developing constitutional values and the rule of law in our country, in line with evolving global realities, remains one of the key priorities at present. In particular, globalization processes, geopolitical changes in the system of international relations, and the rapid development of modern technologies necessitate the introduction of new mechanisms for the flexible and effective protection of human rights and freedoms.

In this regard, it is essential to improve the normative legal framework in order to harmonize modern trends and emerging legal relations with constitutional principles, to study and apply positive international practices in this field, and to ensure the proper use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, along with the establishment of coordinated mechanisms for cybersecurity. Furthermore, it is of particular importance to promote digital literacy and a culture of information security, as well as to implement human rights awareness programs tailored to specific target groups.

The 2025 Annual Report of the Ombudsman presents an objective analysis of the achievements attained in the field of human rights protection, as well as existing challenges, while also putting forward well-founded proposals on future areas of activity aimed at ensuring more effective protection of rights. These proposals have been formulated in accordance with the universal principles of human rights, the specific features of the national legal system, and international standards.

In conclusion, it should be noted that ensuring human rights is not only a legal obligation but also one of the fundamental conditions for the existence and sustainable development of society, as well as for the protection of social justice and human dignity. In this regard, I call upon state institutions, academic and educational establishments, research centers, civil society institutions, media representatives, and society as a whole to strengthen joint efforts and cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Sabina Aliyeva

The Commissioner for Human Rights
of the Republic of Azerbaijan
(Ombudsman)

Chapter I

PROTECTION OF HUMAN AND CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

1.1. Protection of Civil and Political Rights

Right to liberty. The right to liberty, as enshrined in international human rights instruments and domestic law, is a cornerstone of the human rights framework and a fundamental prerequisite for the exercise of other rights.

The right to liberty, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, secures to everyone lawfully within its territory the freedom of movement, the right to choose their place of residence, and the right to leave the country, as well as the unconditional right of citizens to return at any time without hindrance. This right may be restricted only in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the law, including by way of detention, arrest, or deprivation of liberty.

The provision of identity cards (ID cards) and general passports to citizens not only enables the effective exercise of the right to liberty but also prevents undue restrictions in interactions with public authorities, institutions, and organizations, as well as in access to various services.

During the reporting period, complaints received by the Ombudsman concerning the right to liberty were primarily about the provision of ID cards and registration at the place of residence or stay. As in previous years, instances persist of unlawful deregistration of persons registered at the addresses of police administrative buildings, as well as refusals to register persons without a place of residence at such addresses, contrary to the requirements of Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 55s of 9 April 2003. As a consequence of measures taken in respect of such complaints, the violated rights of some citizens were restored.

(App.No.1662-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman that she and her child had been deregistered from their place of residence and that her request to the Ganja City Main Police Department for registration at a police administrative address yielded no results.

With the intervention of the Ombudsman with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the applicant and her child were duly registered.

(App.No.3827-25): Applicant N. complained to the Ombudsman that she and her child had been deregistered pursuant to a court decision and, lacking a permanent residence, had not been registered and were without valid ID documents, and sought assistance.

As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the applicant and her child were registered and provided with ID cards.

Furthermore, the examination of complaints reveals instances of undue delays in issuing ID cards and effecting registration at the place of residence, as well as failures to comply with applicable normative legal acts.

(App.No.6548/2-25): Applicant N. complained to the Ombudsman that, due to the absence of a residence, her children had not been registered or issued ID cards, and sought assistance.

Subsequently, the Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 55s of 9 April 2003 regulating the relevant matters.

In response to the inquiry, it was indicated that the applicant had been advised to apply to an ASAN Service center with the documents required under Article 5(2) of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Registration at the Place of Residence and Place of Stay" in order to register her children.

This example, as well as the analysis of similar complaints, indicates that the requirements of the abovementioned Decree by the Cabinet of Ministers are often not duly fulfilled when examining applications for the registration of persons without residence, and this leads to restrictions on the exercise of other rights.

The received complaints also revealed problems, such as unjustified restrictions on the right to leave the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an essential component of the right to liberty. The necessary measures were taken to restore the right to freedom of movement as a result of inquiries to the relevant state authorities.

(App.No.4312-25): Applicant A complained to the Ombudsman that his request for the provision of a passport had not been considered and asked for help.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, it was indicated that the applicant had been refused a passport due to an exit restriction imposed by the Nasimi District Prosecutor's Office.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention, the applicant's "hold" status in the border restrictions system was removed and deactivated by the Criminalistics and Information Technologies Department of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

(App.No.5746 -25): Applicant A complained to the Ombudsman that his right to leave the country had been temporarily restricted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan without notification.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry, it was indicated that, following an investigation conducted by the Main Investigation and Inquiry Department in December 2023 in relation to a complaint concerning the unlawful appropriation of an apartment belonging to another person, criminal proceedings had been refused, and the restriction on the applicant's departure from the country had been lifted.

According to the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, when he/she is arrested or any measure of restraint is applied to him/her in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Azerbaijan until release, expiration, or cancellation of the measure of restraint; However, investigations into certain complaints revealed instances where the relevant state authorities had failed to comply with this requirement of the Code.

(App.No.6400 -25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman that his right to leave the country had been restricted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs without any reason and that his requests had remained unanswered.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry, it was indicated that a criminal case under Article 178.2.4 of the Criminal Code had been initiated by the Department for Investigation of Serious Crimes of the Baku City Main Police Department in connection with the misappropriation of funds, and that a restriction on the applicant's border crossing had been imposed to prevent him from leaving the country during the investigation. However, as no restraint measure had been applied to the applicant in accordance with the Migration Code as mentioned earlier, it was found that the restriction had been imposed without a sufficient legal basis.

The occurrence of such cases is attributable not only to functional shortcomings but also to the absence of clearly defined procedural mechanisms in the Criminal Procedure Code reflecting the substantive provisions of the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this regard, taking into account the requirements of Article 9.3 of the Migration Code, it is considered appropriate to introduce the necessary amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code in order to ensure legal certainty, safeguard the right to freedom of movement from unjustified restrictions, and prevent inconsistent practices in the activities of law enforcement authorities.

The Ombudsman has also maintained attention on protecting the rights of citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan who are abroad and have fallen into difficult living conditions. During the reported year, the Ombudsman received individuals seeking assistance in facilitating the repatriation of citizens of Azerbaijan, particularly women and children, who were being held captive in camps in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. Furthermore, in connection with the existing problem, official correspondences were sent to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, and other competent state authorities, and recommendations were submitted regarding the repatriation of those citizens to the country.

As a result of measures undertaken by the relevant state authorities in 2025, the repatriation of 18 citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan (5 women and 13 children) from the Syrian Arab Republic was carried out.

Right to Equality. In the modern human rights system, the right to equality is a fundamental value underpinning justice and social stability. It ensures equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms without discrimination.

The right to equality and the prohibition of discrimination are enshrined in international instruments, including the UDHR, ICCPR, and CERD, and are recognized in national laws as core state obligations.

According to Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, everyone is equal before the law and the courts. The state guarantees the equality of rights and freedoms of everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs, or affiliation with political parties, trade unions, and other public associations. According to the same article, it is prohibited to restrict the rights and freedoms on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, beliefs, and political and social affiliation.

To effectively protect the right to equality, handle complaints promptly, raise awareness in cooperation with state bodies, and apply best practices, a unit on Ensuring Right to Equality was established within the Ombudsman Office. A Department for Monitoring Equality and Discrimination was established to improve a systematic approach to human rights protection, coordination, and effectiveness under the Ombudsman's IMM mandate. The relevant unit was incorporated into the Department's structure.

During the year, the Ombudsman examined complaints of alleged violations of the right to equality. In some cases, legal advice and clarification of legislation were provided. Social media and media reports were monitored, and relevant state bodies were engaged to address discrimination complaints.

(App. No. 12875-25): In July, applicant K. reported that her daughter was denied admission to the Military Medical Faculty at the Azerbaijan Medical University due to wearing a hijab and requested assistance.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry, the Azerbaijan Medical University confirmed her admission to the first year of the Military Medicine program.

For 2024/2025, admission to the Military Medical Faculty of Azerbaijan Medical University was limited to male applicants, along with age criteria. However, this restriction was lifted for 2025/2026.

Some discrimination claims were not substantiated; it was found that their rights had been upheld, and applicants were informed accordingly.

(App. No. 890-25): Applicant R. alleged to the Ombudsman that his employment was terminated due to his national origin and requested assistance.

With the Ombudsman's inquiry, the State Labor Inspectorate Service under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MLSPP) found that the applicant's contract had expired and noted that his child works at the same institution. The alleged discrimination was not substantiated, and the applicant was informed accordingly.

(App. No. 8153-25): Applicant Sh. alleged to the Ombudsman that she was discriminated against at her secondary school due to a third-degree disability and her teaching hours were reduced, and sought assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry, the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education reported that the 20-hour technology teaching load was split equally between two teachers (10 hours each).

During the year, media and social content were continuously monitored, and alleged equality violations were promptly investigated.

The Ombudsman promptly responded to media reports of alleged racist treatment of a Cameroonian "Difai" FC player by referees in the First League, met with him, and directed the case to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and AFFA for further investigation and prevention of recurrence. Following the Ombudsman's inquiries, both the club management and the player were invited to AFFA for discussions. The player stated that the incident during the match was a refereeing error and submitted a written statement confirming that no racial discrimination or unethical conduct by the referees had occurred.

AFFA further stated that human rights, including equality of participants, are a priority, that ongoing awareness-raising measures are implemented in football competitions, and that participants are regularly informed. It also noted that, where violations occur, appropriate disciplinary measures are applied in accordance with the law.

An appeal was made to Azerbaijan Television and Radio Broadcasting Closed Joint-Stock Company regarding sexist remarks about a FIFA-certified assistant referee made on the program "*Futbol Var.*" The response indicated that such incidents would be closely monitored and measures taken to prevent recurrence.

The authorities were contacted regarding BakuBus LLC's job postings offering higher pay to female drivers, raising concerns of gender discrimination, and amendments were requested. As a result, the issue was remedied, and it was stated that the matter would remain under review.

Awareness-raising and cooperation with local, regional, and international organizations, as well as foreign national human rights institutions, continued to promote equality and prevent discrimination.

The Ombudsman organized an awareness-raising event on "Ensuring and Promoting Equality and Preventing Discrimination," with the participation of representatives of local executive authorities, NGOs, and other relevant bodies. The event provided an overview of the Ombudsman's mandate, and the work of relevant units and monitoring groups and included a presentation on key principles of equality and non-discrimination in the human rights context.

During the "Human Rights Month" (18 May-18 June), an awareness-raising event dedicated to the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty" was held in Naftalan, jointly organized by the Ombudsman Office and the Naftalan City Executive Authority. The Ombudsman representative made a presentation on equality and non-discrimination and the display of informational materials.

The Ombudsman's regional centers conducted a series of legal awareness-raising events in Ganja, Gadabay, Guba, and Gusar on combating discrimination and ensuring equality, protecting the rights of PWDs, gender equality, and the role of the family as a core social institution.

As part of the "Human Rights Month," an informational tool entitled "Know Your Rights, Stand against Discrimination!" was prepared in the Azerbaijani and English languages under the Ombudsman's equality mandate to raise awareness on equality and non-discrimination.

In addition, at the initiative of the Ombudsman, an educational material entitled "The Principle of Non-Discrimination and the Role of Ombudspersons in Combating Hate Speech and Xenophobia" was prepared.

It outlines the concept, types, and features of hate speech, summarizes international legal standards and best practices and highlights the role and activities of ombudspersons in this field.

At the XI Baku International Book Fair, held at the Baku Expo Center and organized by the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan, printed materials prepared at the Ombudsman's initiative to promote the right to equality were exhibited.

The Ombudsman initiated the production of a social video to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, aiming to raise public awareness. The video emphasizes that in a country where multiculturalism and diversity are upheld, all individuals, including vulnerable groups, enjoy equal rights and freedoms and that discrimination on grounds such as sex, race/skin color, criminal record, disability, age, religion, or other characteristics is unacceptable. It further emphasizes that, from a gender equality perspective, men and women enjoy equal rights and freedoms and share responsibilities within the family, particularly with respect to their children.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding concluded by the Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, an extensive exchange of experience was conducted during an official visit of the Ombudsman-led delegation to Türkiye. During the visit, monitoring were carried out at the Gaziantep Şehitkamil Open Penitentiary Institution and TDPs of the Gaziantep Şehitkamil District Police Department.

Staff of the Ombudsman Office took part in a peer-to-peer exchange of experience on "Anti-discrimination practices from the perspectives of Ombudspersons' Offices of Montenegro and Azerbaijan". Discussions covered gender equality and the rights of women and PWDs, alongside an exchange of practices on strengthening equality protection, and included a meeting at the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.

The Ombudsman's representative took part in the third Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the OSCE in Vienna, on "Human Rights and Equality: The Role of Effective National Mechanisms." He outlined reforms in Azerbaijan to advance equality, strengthen protection mechanisms, amendments to the Constitutional Law, and the Ombudsman's IMM mandate. The presentation also covered awareness-raising initiatives, including publications and video materials, followed by an exchange of views.

Ombudsman representatives took part in the ECRI's 2025 Annual Seminar in Strasbourg and delivered presentations across sessions, outlining activities and best practices in ensuring equality and combating discrimination and related legal awareness efforts, followed by constructive discussions.

The Ombudsman's representatives participated in Geneva, Switzerland, in the event dedicated to the 60th anniversary of CERD. They presented the Ombudsman's work and good practices in promoting equality and preventing discrimination, including the newly established dedicated unit within the Office and the activities of the monitoring group operating under the IMM mandate. Proposals on strengthening human rights protection mechanisms and enhancing future cooperation were also put forward.

In addition, the Ombudsman's comments on ECRI's interim follow-up recommendations addressed to Azerbaijan were submitted to the institution.

Right of Access to Information. The right of access to information constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of modern democratic states, playing a critical role in ensuring effective public oversight, transparency, accountability, and, consequently, the effective protection of human rights and freedoms.

The Ombudsman, acting under its supervisory mandate derived from the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Access to Information," has continued its activities to ensure the implementation and restoration of violations of this right, eliminate existing problems, and extend public legal awareness in this area.

Complaints received by the Ombudsman were mainly about failures by information holders to respond to information requests in accordance with legally prescribed procedures, deadlines, and methods; unlawful refusals to provide information; and including failures to ensure full and accurate disclosure of public

information, among other issues. In response, the Ombudsman addressed relevant authorities and ensured that requests were handled in compliance with legal requirements.

(App.No.8616-25): Applicant lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman that his information requests to the State Service for Property Issues under the Ministry of Economy have yielded no results.

With the intervention of the Ombudsman, the request was responded to, and the applicant expressed thankfulness for this.

(App.No.16306-25): Applicant L. complained about the lack of response from the State Labor Inspectorate Service under the MLSPP.

During the investigation, it was established that statutory deadlines under Articles 10.4.4 and 24.1 of the Law "On Access to Information" were violated. Therefore, the Ombudsman Institution initiated administrative proceedings under Article 99 of the Code of Administrative Offences, and the information holder was notified accordingly. The request was subsequently addressed.

(App.No.18604-25): Similarly, the complaint addressed to the Ombudsman regarding the violation of the right to information by the Analytical Expertise Center of the Ministry of Health was investigated and the fact was confirmed; subsequently, the administrative protocol was drawn up and on the legal entity was imposed a fine of 1,500 AZN by the Yasamal District Court.

In addition, information requests addressed to the Ombudsman as an information holder were duly processed within the legally prescribed timeframes.

(App.No.4256-25): An information request filed by an applicant A. was also handled and duly responded, including the Ombudsman's activities in the field of protection of child rights, the procedure for how such applications is investigated by the Call Center, and preventive measures in this field.

With a view to increasing public awareness of the right of access to information, the Ombudsman placed particular emphasis on the systematic and continuous organization of targeted awareness-raising activities. Extensive explanatory work was undertaken, and public discussions, training sessions, and awareness campaigns were conducted, contributing to the enhancement of legal knowledge and the improvement of the performance of relevant institutions in this field.

Through the 'Year of Constitution and Sovereignty,' the Ombudsman organized awareness-raising events aimed at promoting the right of access to information in Khankendi and Sheki, as well as in the Tartar, Barda, and Naftalan districts. These events provided an overview of the core provisions of the Law 'On Access to Information,' the respective rights and obligations of information holders and requesters, and the Ombudsman's role in the protection of this right. A thematic video prepared at the Ombudsman's initiative was screened, and informational materials were disseminated to participants.

At the initiative of the Ombudsman, training sessions were also conducted for senior officials of the MLSPP and its subordinate bodies, including the State Medical-Social Expertise and Rehabilitation Agency, the Sustainable and Operational Social Security Agency (DOST Agency), and the State Employment Agency, on ensuring and protecting the right of access to information.

In 2025, within the framework of the 150th anniversary of the Azerbaijani press, the Ombudsman Institution prepared an educational booklet entitled 'The Right of Access of Media Entities and Journalists to Information,' intended for media stakeholders and journalists.

At the 11th Baku International Book Fair, held at the Baku Expo Center, an event entitled 'Directions of the Ombudsman's Activities: New Human Rights Approaches and Perspectives' was organized. Information was provided on the Ombudsman's work in the protection of the right of access to information, and printed materials were exhibited.

In addition to the above, international cooperation and the exchange of experience in the field of promoting and protecting the right of access to information have also been of particular importance.

At the invitation of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) Transparency and Access to Information Network's (RTA) Gender and Vulnerable Groups Working Group and partners from Buenos Aires, the Ombudsman joined the global campaign "*Tu Info, Tu Derecho*" (Your Info, Your Rights). By joining this international campaign, she supported efforts to promote the global significance of the right to information, increase public awareness, and reinforce international advocacy to protect this right.

At the 16th International Conference of Information Commissioners, held in Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany, the Ombudsman delivered a presentation during the interactive panel session entitled "Exchange of Information Commissioners about New Challenges and the Good Practices", providing detailed information on national experience in promoting and protecting the right of access to information. Meetings were also held with ombudsmen of foreign states, heads of national human rights institutions, and information commissioners, during which issues of mutual cooperation were discussed.

Furthermore, the participation of the Ombudsman Office staff in the training programme on 'Data Protection Practices,' held in Zagreb, Croatia, was significant in terms of exchanging experience on institutional and regulatory mechanisms in the fields of personal data protection and digitalization, the responsible use and legal regulation of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity frameworks, and procedures for the examination, investigation, and resolution of complaints.

The Institution's staff also participated in the Global Conference on "Ensuring Access to Environmental Information in the Digital Age", held in Manila, the capital of the Republic of the Philippines, on the occasion of the International Day for Universal Access to Information and co-organized by UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, as well as in the webinar entitled 'Access to Information for Persons from Vulnerable Population Groups: Exchange of Information,' organized by the International Conference of Information Commissioners.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the designation of 28 September by UNESCO as the International Day for Universal Access to Information, the International Conference of Information Commissioners prepared a Special Edition Newsletter reflecting activities and initiatives undertaken worldwide. Information on the Azerbaijani Ombudsman's activities and achievements in this field was included in the newsletter and subsequently published on the institution's official website.

In recent years, the rapid development of information technologies, particularly the widespread application of artificial intelligence across various sectors, has had a significant impact on the realization of the right of access to information. This development necessitates the continuous improvement of legal frameworks governing the protection of personal data, as well as other categories of information subject to statutory restrictions, and the implementation of enhanced security mechanisms. Such technologies inherently involve the collection, processing, and analysis of personal data, thereby increasing the risk of interference with the right to privacy. Accordingly, the protection of personal data in the context of artificial intelligence must be addressed through a comprehensive approach encompassing not only technical measures but also legal and ethical considerations.

Accordingly, it is essential to ensure the proper use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, to establish coordinated cybersecurity mechanisms, to strengthen oversight measures, and to implement awareness-raising programs aimed at promoting digital literacy and a culture of information security.

Right to suffrage (Right to vote/be elected). Electoral law, as one of the fundamental pillars of a democratic society, constitutes a core political right that ensures citizens' participation in the governance of the state.

This right is guaranteed on the basis of the principles of universal, equal, and direct suffrage and secret ballot, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, electoral legislation, and international

treaties to which the country is a party. The effective exercise of electoral rights is contingent not only upon the existence of a sound normative legal framework but also upon transparency at all stages of the electoral process, as well as the availability of legal safeguards and effective remedies.

On 29 January 2025, regular municipal elections were held in Azerbaijan. To ensure that the elections were conducted freely, fairly, and transparently in compliance with laws and to inform electoral stakeholders, the Central Election Commission held awareness-raising measures, including seminars for candidates and training programs for members of lower-level election commissions. Participants were provided with the necessary methodological guides and visual materials.

The status of ensuring citizens' suffrage was closely monitored by the Ombudsman. At the Ombudsman's initiative, a working group was established within the Ombudsman Office to facilitate the prompt exchange of information on the protection of rights during the electoral period.

In addition, the Ombudsman Office and its regional centers organized awareness-raising activities on electoral rights in Baku and across the regions and distributed informational publications.

Taking into account the good practice in previous years, staff members (a total of 72 people) of the Ombudsman Office and its regional centers, as well as the Ombudsman Office of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, conducted independent monitoring ex officio during the municipal elections. They were deployed at polling stations, including those located in military units, the Training and Education Center of the Azerbaijan Army, 16 penitentiary institutions, and other closed facilities.

Observations in Baku and at 708 polling stations across the country in 101 electoral areas in 37 cities and districts, including the autonomous republic, established that the necessary conditions set forth by law had been created to ensure the citizens' electoral rights. The authorities made appropriate arrangements to facilitate the effective exercise of electoral rights by PWDs, the elderly, and individuals suffering from various illnesses.

During the observation process, the Ombudsman met with members of precinct election commissions; local and international observers, and voters; assessed the general situation; and provided relevant proposals and recommendations.

Information received from institutional staff participating as observers in the electoral process across the country facilitated ongoing monitoring of the protection of electoral rights.

On election day, the Ombudsman received no complaints or applications regarding alleged violations of electoral rights.

Overall, monitoring conducted of the regular municipal elections in the country indicates that the elections were, overall, conducted in compliance with national legislation and international standards.

Protection of the rights and freedoms of participants in pre-trial proceedings: Pre-trial proceedings are an initial and very important stage of the criminal process. The quality and admissibility of evidence collected at this stage, the lawfulness of procedural measures, and compliance with the rights in the proceedings are of key importance in the following judicial proceedings. Violations at this stage may undermine both individual rights and the overall fairness of the trial.

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, criminal procedure legislation, and international treaties binding on the state establish legal guarantees for ensuring the rights and freedoms of participants in criminal proceedings at the pre-trial stage.

Under the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, authorities conducting criminal proceedings must ensure that the human and civil rights and freedoms of all participants are respected.

In this regard, ensuring the rights and freedoms of participants in criminal proceedings as enshrined in

international and national law, removing obstacles to their exercise, and restoring violated rights are key areas of the Ombudsman's activity.

The relevant complaints received by the Ombudsman mainly concerned unlawful detention, failure to carry out proper documentation, lack of information on rights and obligations, denial of access to legal assistance and interpretation, and failure to notify family members of detention. The Ombudsman's "916" Call Center played a significant role in the prompt receipt and effective handling of such complaints.

(App.No.10488-25): Lawyer Z. contacted the Call Center, informing us that his client, held at the Bilasuvar District Police Department, was not allowed to meet or communicate by phone with family members, and requested assistance.

With the prompt measures taken by the Ombudsman, the detainee's right was restored.

(App.No.10864-25): Lawyer F. reached the Call Center and requested assistance, stating that his client, a citizen of Belarus, detained at Police Division No. 21 of the Nasimi District Police Department, required an interpreter, and that no proper documentation had been carried out in this regard.

Following the prompt action by the Ombudsman, the individual was released.

Analysis of the complaints and findings of the investigations showed that, in some cases, detainees in police custody faced difficulties in meeting with their lawyers.

The complaints received were also about concerns related to a lack of objective pre-trial investigations, failure to inform participants about the progress of proceedings, unjustified refusal to initiate criminal cases, failure to open cases, unlawful termination or suspension of proceedings, failure to adopt procedural decisions or provide copies thereof, and alleged ill-treatment. These complaints were examined through inquiries addressed to the relevant authorities, and appropriate legal measures were ensured.

(App.No.5788-25): R. complained to the Ombudsman about an assault on him by six persons at a "Taxi" (pronounced as Takht) tea house in Ganja, and his related complaint was not investigated by the Ganja City Main Police Department, and requested to take legal action.

With the Ombudsman's intervention with the Ganja City Prosecutor's Office, a criminal case was initiated by the Ganja City Main Police Department under Article 221.1 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan and referred for investigation.

(App.No.6802-25): E. requested the Ombudsman for legal action, claiming that his residence has been taken from him under threat and that his plea to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' "102" Call Center had been unsuccessful.

With the Ombudsman's intervention, the issue was resolved, and the applicant expressed gratitude.

(App.No.997-25): Complainant applied to the Ombudsman, expressing dissatisfaction with the decision of the Yasamal District Police Department to refuse the initiation of criminal proceedings in connection with an alleged fraud, and requested that appropriate legal measures be taken.

As a result of the Ombudsman's request to the Yasamal District Prosecutor's Office regarding the complaint, the decision was revoked, and the case was remitted to the Investigation Department of the Yasamal District Police Department for additional examination.

(App.No.4076-25): Applicant A. requested the Ombudsman for legal measures, claiming that his plea to the "102" Service Call Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the misappropriation of a certain sum of money had yielded no results.

With the Ombudsman's request to the Ministry, an inquiry was conducted by Police Station No. 43 of the Binagadi District Police Department of Baku, and the matter was resolved. The applicant thanked the Ombudsman for the assistance.

(App.No.9873-25): Applicant V. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that the Jalilabad District Prosecutor's Office had unreasonably refused to initiate criminal proceedings under Article 39.1.2 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Azerbaijan in relation to his complaint against the director of the Uchtepe village general secondary school in the Jalilabad district, and requested that appropriate legal measures be taken.

With the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Prosecutor General's Office of Azerbaijan, the said decision was revoked and the materials were remitted for additional investigation. The applicant expressed gratitude to the Ombudsman.

In certain instances, measures taken in response to serious violations committed by law enforcement officers during their official duties ensured that appropriate legal actions were pursued against the individuals involved.

(App.No.13182/7-25): Lawyer E. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that the rights of his client A., were violated at the Sumgayit City Police Department, as a result of which his client attempted self-immolation in the temporary detention facility (TDP) of the same department, and requested that necessary measures be taken.

The Ombudsman's investigation of the complaint has resulted in dismissal of the head of the TDP from his position, and imposition of disciplinary reprimands on the police officers in charge.

The Ombudsman proposes a number of legislative and regulatory measures to ensure more effective protection of the rights of participants in criminal proceedings, including: increasing the remuneration established by Resolution No. 31 of 1 February 2001 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan (currently set at 0.35 manat per hour) for services rendered by interpreters, specialists, and experts during criminal proceedings; introducing amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code to extend the provision of Article 233 (Interrogation of the accused), which stipulates that, except in urgent cases, the accused may be questioned only during daytime hours to other participants in criminal proceedings, with a view to ensuring equality and preventing discrimination; supplementing Article 123-2 of the same Code with a provision prohibiting the dissemination by participants in criminal proceedings of investigation materials concerning child victims of sexual violence; and amending Article 222.7 of the Criminal Procedure Code and Article 15.1.5 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Media" to prohibit, without exceptions, the disclosure of information identifying minor suspects, accused persons, or victims.

Awareness-raising activities were organized to enhance public knowledge in the relevant field, as well as to improve the functioning of competent state bodies and strengthen cooperation, particularly within the framework of the "Human Rights Month" and "Child Rights Month" initiatives declared by the Ombudsman.

In order to enhance the knowledge and practical skills of internal affairs personnel in the protection of human and civil rights and freedoms, as well as improving their ability to apply normative legal acts and adopt advanced working methods, regular awareness-raising activities on various topical issues have been conducted at the Police Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

A representative of the Ombudsman Office conducted a seminar for the leadership of district (city) police departments and divisions on combating corruption, accompanied by an interactive exchange of views.

Judicial Guarantees for Human Rights and Freedoms. As one of the fundamental principles of a democratic state governed by the rule of law, judicial protection of rights and freedoms is a key institutional mechanism that ensures the effective protection of individuals' constitutional rights and legitimate interests against violations. Fair trial guarantees, the timely and proper enforcement of court decisions, and the effective

functioning of judicial oversight serve to uphold the rule of law and legal certainty, while contributing to the development of legal culture.

Therefore, international human rights instruments recognize judicial protection of rights and freedoms as a fundamental right.

Under the mandate established by the Constitutional Law, the Ombudsman plays a crucial role in identifying and addressing systemic shortcomings in the administration of justice by examining complaints concerning undue delays in court proceedings, the loss or late issuance of documents, and delays in the enforcement of court decisions. In this regard, the Ombudsman's activities in this field are of significant legal and institutional importance.

The incoming applications about the failure of judicial protection of rights and freedoms primarily relate to undue delays in court proceedings; violations of procedural rights during judicial examination; dissatisfaction with the actions (or inaction) of judges, including failure to comply with judicial ethics; the untimely provision of copies of court decisions to parties, thereby restricting their right to appeal, as well as the non-enforcement of final court decisions and breaches of ethical standards by enforcement officers.

Where violations of citizens' rights were identified during the examination of complaints, the necessary measures were taken to remedy them, while in cases falling outside the Ombudsman's mandate, applicants were provided with appropriate responses, including explanations of the relevant legal provisions.

In response to complaints concerning undue delays in court proceedings and the failure to provide or timely deliver copies of court decisions to the parties, necessary measures were implemented based on inquiries made to the competent authorities.

(App. No. 4975-25): Applicant R. complained to the Ombudsman about the failure to provide him with the relevant ruling of the Baku Administrative Court in the case to which he was a party and requested appropriate assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the court, the necessary measures were taken, and the court's ruling dated 17.02.2025 was uploaded to the electronic court information system on 19.03.2025 and made available in the applicant's electronic account on the same date.

(App. No. 18622-25): Applicant G. requested the Ombudsman for assistance in providing him with a copy of the judgment of the Yevlakh District Court dated 05.09.2025 in the civil case to which he was a party.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry to the court, it was indicated that a copy of the judgment dated 05.09.2025 had been sent by post on 07.10.2025 to the applicant's residential address.

Taking into account that a number of individuals have limited access to technical means and internet resources, as well as insufficient skills in using them, it is considered appropriate to allow parties to choose whether court decisions are delivered electronically or in hard copy.

The enforcement of court decisions constitutes a cornerstone of the effective administration of justice. Failure to ensure their timely and proper enforcement undermines the effectiveness and authority of the judiciary and adversely affects the principles of legal certainty and the rule of law.

The incoming complaints concerning the non-enforcement of court decisions were investigated, and in many cases, the necessary measures were ensured to secure their full or partial enforcement and to eliminate undue delays.

(App.No.15202-25): Applicant Sh. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that the enforcement document

issued by the Absheron District Court concerning a mortgage obligation had not been executed by the debtor and that the Absheron District Enforcement and Probation Department had failed to take the necessary measures.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the Ministry of Justice, enforcement of the court decision was ensured, and the enforcement proceedings were concluded.

(App. No. 17320-25): Applicant F. complained to the Ombudsman about the failure to enforce of a court decision in a civil case to which he was a party, concerning the recovery of a debt, by the Neftchala District Enforcement and Probation Department.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Justice, an investigation was conducted. According to the response, during the enforcement proceedings initiated by the Neftchala District Enforcement and Probation Department, no assets belonging to the debtor against which enforcement could be directed were identified. As the debtor's whereabouts could not be established, a search was initiated, and he was subsequently located and brought before the enforcement authority. The debtor was subjected to administrative detention for a period of 8 days by a relevant decision of the Neftchala District Court for failure to comply with the lawful demands of the enforcement officer. Enforcement of the debt in favor of the claimant was ensured, and, upon identification of the debtor's place of employment, recovery was directed to his income.

Complaints concerning the non-enforcement of court decisions on alimony continued to constitute a significant proportion, as in previous years. The investigations resulted in ensuring full or partial payment of alimony arrears in a number of cases.

(App. No. 8306-25): Applicant T. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that alimony payments by her former spouse were irregular and that the necessary enforcement measures had not been taken, and requested appropriate assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the Ministry of Justice, the matter was examined. According to the response during the enforcement proceedings initiated by the Absheron District Enforcement and Probation Department, the claim had not been regularly satisfied by the debtor, no assets against which enforcement could be directed had been identified, and although the debtor's place of employment had been established and recovery had been directed to his income, he was subsequently dismissed from his job.

By a relevant ruling of the Absheron District Court, the debtor's right to leave the country had been temporarily restricted, and, pursuant to another decision of the same court, he had been subjected to administrative detention for a period of 10 days. It was also reported that a total of 10,166 manats of the alimony arrears accrued during the enforcement proceedings had been recovered.

(App. No. 17115-25): Applicant Z. requested the Ombudsman to take necessary measures regarding the debtor's failure to enforce a judgment of the Absheron District Court in a civil case concerning alimony and requested the necessary measures be taken.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Justice, the matter was examined. According to the response, payment of the debt had been ensured during the enforcement proceedings conducted by the Shirvan City Enforcement and Probation Department, and enforcement was being supervised by the competent local authority.

(App. No. 5778-25): Applicant N. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that the judgment of the Sabirabad District Court in a civil case concerning alimony had not been enforced by the debtor.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Justice, the matter was examined and it was

indicated in the response that, during the enforcement proceedings initiated by the Sabirabad District Enforcement and Probation Department, the debtor was found to be receiving a pension, and recovery was directed to his income. An amount of 329 manats was withheld and paid to the claimant, and recovery of the remaining debt will continue.

The problem of non-enforcement of court decisions by state authorities acting as debtors persists. This is linked to the inadequacy of enforcement mechanisms and coercive measures, as well as the lack of effective oversight of enforcement. Accordingly, the need to review enforcement mechanisms in respect of state debtor authorities remains pressing.

(App. No. 13705-25): Applicant G. complained to the Ombudsman about the non-enforcement of the decision of the Baku Administrative-Economic Court No. 2 dated 27.09.2017 by the Central Branch for Special Assignments of the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, and requested assistance in taking measures in accordance with the law.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the Baku Administrative Court, the matter was examined. In the response provided, it was indicated that, by a ruling of the court dated 29.08.2022, a fine of 1,000 manats had been imposed on the respondent authority for failure to fully enforce the decision of 27.09.2017, with the fine to be recovered compulsorily and paid to the state budget. It was also noted that the enforcement writ dated 03 November 2023 had been forwarded to the Yasamal District Enforcement Department to ensure execution.

In order to continue the examination of the complaint, an inquiry was addressed to the Ministry of Justice. In the response provided, it was indicated that, during the enforcement proceedings initiated by the Yasamal District Enforcement Department and continued by the Narimanov District Enforcement Department, the claim had not been voluntarily satisfied. According to information submitted by the Central Branch for Special Assignments of the State Social Protection Fund to the local enforcement authority, a request had been made to the Prosecutor General's Office for a legal assessment of the facts identified in relation to the assignment and recalculation of old-age labor pensions on preferential terms in significant amounts. On 11.09.2025, the local enforcement authority had again applied to the said Central Branch regarding enforcement of the court decision, and that the relevant enforcement document had been included in the list of court decisions whose execution by state authorities had not been ensured.

The final and binding court decision on the claim was not enforced by the respondent state authority, in violation of Article 129 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The ineffectiveness of enforcement mechanisms resulted in a violation of the applicant's rights.

As enshrined in Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the right to legal assistance serves in its substance and purpose as an essential means of ensuring the realization of other human and civil rights and freedoms. As a fundamental element of the right to a fair trial, it guarantees access to quality legal assistance and, in cases specified by law, the provision of such assistance free of charge at the expense of the State.

Appeals addressed to the Ombudsman concerning the right to legal assistance primarily related to restrictions on meetings with counsel, the provision of inadequate legal assistance by lawyers, the involvement of a state-appointed lawyer by the investigative authority despite the person having privately retained counsel and refusing state-funded representation, the use of inappropriate or unethical language or conduct by lawyers, as well as requests for assistance in obtaining state-funded legal aid and other related matters. To examine the complaints and take the necessary measures, inquiries were addressed to the relevant inquiry and pre-trial investigation bodies, prosecution authorities, courts, and the Bar Association. In cases falling outside the Ombudsman's mandate, applicants were provided with responses explaining the applicable legal provisions.

Analysis of the complaints indicates that, in a number of cases, obstacles were created by inquiry and pre-trial investigation bodies to individuals' access to quality legal assistance, including in places that they could

not leave of their own free will. Appeals received by the Ombudsman, as well as through the '916' Call Center, concerning restrictions on the right of lawyers to meet privately and without hindrance with persons they defend or represent, in accordance with the law, were examined promptly.

(App. No. 8058-25): Lawyer N. contacted the Ombudsman's '916' Call Center, stating that the person whose rights he was defending was being unlawfully held at the Main Operational-Investigation Department of the State Customs Committee, that his warrant had not been accepted by the investigator, and that he had not been granted access to meet with his client.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry, the matter was examined, and it was established that the detained person had been released. The lawyer was subsequently contacted and informed accordingly.

(App. No. 5865-25): Applicant S. contacted the Ombudsman's '916' Call Center, stating that the decision of the Sheki Court of Appeal dated 30 January 2025 on the provision of state-funded legal aid had not been implemented by the Bar Association, and requested assistance in resolving the matter in accordance with the law.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry, it was established that the ruling of the Administrative Chamber of the Sheki Court of Appeal dated 30.01.2025 on the provision of legal aid at the expense of the state budget had not been forwarded by the court to Baku Legal Bureau No. 7. The ruling was received by the relevant bureau on 02.04.2025, and its execution was assigned to lawyer Ş. on the same day. The lawyer subsequently prepared a cassation appeal and an application for restoration of the time limit and, together with the lawyer's warrant and other documents, delivered them to the applicant on 08.04.2025.

Pursuant to Article 65.1-1 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Azerbaijan, only a lawyer may act as a defender of a natural person in administrative offence proceedings before a court, while a victim may be represented either by a close relative or a lawyer. Restricting representation of the person subject to proceedings to lawyers only limits their ability to effectively exercise their right of defense. In practice, such individuals may lack the financial means to retain a lawyer, and in cases involving minor administrative fines, the cost of legal representation may significantly exceed the amount of the potential penalty, rendering such a defense disproportionate. For these reasons, persons subject to administrative offence proceedings should enjoy defense opportunities equal to those of victims. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to introduce amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences to allow such persons to appoint a close relative as their representative in court.

Efforts were continued to strengthen cooperation with the Bar Association of Azerbaijan and to improve the legislative framework in order to ensure more effective access to legal assistance. Notably, in 2025, amendments and additions were made to the Law 'On Lawyers and Legal Practice', taking into account the Ombudsman's opinions and proposals. At the same time, the hourly remuneration paid to defense lawyers for the provision of legal assistance was increased under paragraph 1 of Decision No. 31 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 1 February 2001 "On the amounts payable to defense lawyers, interpreters, specialists and experts".

1.2. Protection of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Right to Labor. As an integral component of the human rights system, the right to work constitutes a fundamental guarantee for the protection of human dignity, and the promotion of social equality and economic independence, as well as for the individual's self-realization within the framework of societal values.

The right to work encompasses the right of every individual to freely choose their type of activity, profession, occupation, and place of employment; to work under safe and healthy conditions; to receive fair remuneration for work performed without any discrimination; and to be protected against unjustified dismissal.

The Ombudsman's activities to protect the right to work have contributed to the more effective realization of this right and to the prompt elimination of violations.

Complaints received by the Ombudsman in the field of the protection of the right to work primarily concerned the non-payment or delayed payment of wages and leave entitlements; outstanding wage arrears; failure to reimburse business travel expenses and to provide final settlements (including wages, compensation for unused leave, and other payments); termination of employment contracts in violation of labor legislation; engagement of individuals in work without formal employment contracts; and other related issues.

As a result of investigations conducted in response to the Ombudsman's inquiries addressed to the relevant state authorities concerning complaints of labor rights violations, necessary measures were taken to eliminate identified breaches. In a number of cases, administrative protocols were drawn up in respect of employers for violations of labor legislation, and corresponding fines were imposed.

(App. No. 128/4-25): Applicant Z. complained to the Ombudsman that while employed as a laboratory assistant at 'Devechi-Deyirman' LLC, he had not been paid wages for overtime work and that his prior appeals to the relevant authorities had remained without result.

On the basis of the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the State Labor Inspectorate Service under MLSPP, an investigation was conducted. Consequently, the director of the company was imposed on an administrative sanction, and the management was instructed to ensure the applicant's payment for overtime work. The corresponding amount was subsequently transferred to the applicant's bank account.

(App. No. 7143-25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman that his appeals to the competent authorities regarding alleged violations of his labor rights at the Neftchala Water Melioration Systems Operation Department had remained without result.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the 'Regional Water Melioration Service', a public legal entity under the State Water Resources Agency, and consequently, the necessary measures were taken to settle the outstanding wage arrears.

(App. No. 13422-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman that the Tovuz District Central Hospital had failed to reimburse his business travel expenses and that his appeals to the State Labor Inspectorate Service under the MLSPP had remained without result.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry addressed to the Service and consequently, it was established that the applicant and other medical personnel had been assigned to the 'New Clinic' Medical Center for training purposes, but their travel expenses had not been paid in a timely manner. Therefore, the Service decided to impose an administrative conditional fine on the hospital director and issued a formal notice to the hospital management requiring the appeal of the violation.

As a result of the investigation, the Management Union of Medical Territorial Units (TABİB) ensured the payment of the outstanding travel expenses to the applicant and the other medical staff.

(App. No. 7799-25): Applicants H. and I. complained to the Ombudsman that 'Aznur' LLC had failed to pay their wages for January and February 2025, as well as monetary compensation for unused annual leave, and requested appropriate assistance.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Labor Inspectorate Service under the MLSPP, which conducted an investigation. Consequently, through bank transfer, Applicant H. was paid 1,331.66 AZN and Applicant I., was paid AZN 1,541.57, covering wages for January and February 2025 and compensation for unused annual leave.

According to labor legislation, upon termination of an employment contract, the employee must be provided, on the last working day, with a copy of the relevant order (decree or decision), the employment record book, and the final settlement, including compensation for unused annual leave, outstanding wages, and any other payments due.

(App. No. 6488-25): Applicant X. complained to the Ombudsman that despite his dismissal from 'Hajigabul Poultry Company' LLC, he had not received his final settlement and requested appropriate assistance.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Labor Inspectorate Service under the MLSPP, an investigation was conducted. The response indicated that the Service imposed an administrative fine on company's director due to the delayed payment of the applicant's final settlement.

(App. No. 4521-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman that, despite his dismissal from 'Caspian Road Supplying' LLC, his final settlement had not been paid, and requested assistance in restoring his rights.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the State Labor Inspectorate Service under the MLSPP, and an investigation was conducted. Consequently, the Service imposed on the company's director an administrative sanction due to the delayed payment of the applicant's final settlement.

During the examination of incoming complaints about engagement in work without employment contracts, it was established in certain cases that, instead of employment contracts, civil law contracts had been formalized with complainants in violation of labor legislation. In some instances, applicants raised complaints concerning the absence of employment contracts only after their dismissal, which creates certain difficulties in the restoration of their violated labor rights.

(App. No. 12787/2-25): Applicant B. complained to the Ombudsman about a failure by the 'NM Services' LLC to conclude an employment contract with him and requested assistance.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Labor Inspectorate Service; an investigation was conducted. It was established that the applicant had provided cleaning services to the company under a service contract, and her remuneration had been calculated accordingly. However, as the terms of that service contract met the criteria set out in Article 7.2-3.1 and 7.2-3.4 of the Labor Code, the relationship between the parties was deemed to constitute an employment relationship. On this basis, the use of a civil law contract to formalize such relations was considered impermissible. Consequently, administrative offense protocols were drawn up against the company and its responsible official, and administrative proceedings were initiated in respect of the identified violation.

In recent years, the rapid expansion of digitalization and the use of artificial intelligence have had a fundamental impact on the implementation and protection mechanisms of the right to work. Digital technologies create new opportunities in the organization of labor relations, the conclusion and performance of employment contracts, the recording of working time, the calculation of wages, and the provision of occupational safety and health. While these developments facilitate the realization of labor rights and enhance transparency, they also necessitate, in certain cases, the adaptation of existing legal frameworks to evolving conditions and increase the demand for new knowledge and skills.

In this context, several issues relating to the impact of AI on workplaces should be paid particular attention. First, it is essential to assess regional labor markets in order to prepare for technological change, to develop collective measures aimed at safeguarding workers' rights, and to establish support mechanisms for individuals who may face redundancy or difficulties in adaptation as a result of the deployment of artificial intelligence. In this regard, the improvement of the legislative framework is also a key requirement.

The introduction of remote and hybrid working arrangements necessitates the development of revised legal approaches governing the status of employment relationships, the regulation of working time, the recording

of overtime, and the protection of the right to rest. To ensure that labor legislation responds adequately to these developments, it is essential to establish specific safeguards and social protection mechanisms for individuals engaged in remote work.

The deployment of digital monitoring and algorithmic management systems may enhance occupational safety, facilitate the timely identification of workplace risks, and improve the efficiency of labor dispute resolution. The implementation of such technologies must be accompanied by adequate safeguards to ensure the protection of employees' personal data and to mitigate any associated risks.

Another significant impact of information technologies in the field of labor rights concerns occupational safety. While digital monitoring systems and 'smart' manufacturing technologies contribute to reducing risks in the workplace, issues relating to the appropriate balance between employees' rights and responsibilities in automated production environments remain pertinent.

Furthermore, technological development necessitates the continuous enhancement of employees' professional qualifications and educational levels, thereby elevating this requirement to a contemporary component of labor rights. In this context, it is essential to ensure access to programs for professional development and the acquisition of digital skills, as well as to organize targeted training on new technologies through coordinated cooperation between public authorities, SCOs, and the private sector.

Thus, it is possible to ensure a balanced transition to modern technologies through the development of targeted educational programs, the establishment of new specializations, the organization of vocationally oriented courses, and the implementation of a flexible employment policy. In this process, the impacts of the innovations on human rights must be duly and necessarily considered.

According to Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, everyone has the right, on the basis of their capacity for work, to freely choose their type of activity, profession, occupation, and place of employment.

Employment, as a key indicator of the realization of the socio-economic dimensions of human rights, also serves as a guarantee of an individual's personal development and social welfare. From this perspective, employment policy encompasses strategic directions such as the regulation of the labor market, the reduction of unemployment, the integration of youth and vulnerable groups into labor relations, the prevention of informal employment, and the creation of equal opportunities. The examination and analysis of applications in this field, as well as cooperation with relevant state authorities, play a significant role in identifying existing issues in the protection of the right to employment and in facilitating their resolution.

The incoming employment applications primarily highlight that, in a number of cases, the referrals issued to citizens by employment authorities are merely formalities. Furthermore, employers often neglect to respond to or accept such referrals, demonstrating a lack of regard for them.

(App. No. 8463-25): Applicant H. requested assistance from the Ombudsman in finding suitable employment commensurate with his higher education qualifications.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Employment Agency under the MLSPP. It was found that a suitable job vacancy (security guard at "Alachi Education Center" LLC) had been offered to the applicant from the vacancy database formed within the "Labor and Employment" subsystem (hereinafter - EMAS). As the applicant accepted the proposed position, the referral to the vacancy and the data from the individual employment record were transmitted electronically by EMAS to the employer; however, no response was provided by the employer. The reply further noted that, pursuant to Article 11 of the Labor Code of Azerbaijan, the conclusion of employment contracts with employees, the amendment of their terms, and the termination of such contracts constitute fundamental rights of the employer.

(App. No. 9441-25): Applicant A. requested assistance from the Ombudsman in securing employment for his/her child.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry addressed to the State Employment Agency under the MLSPP, it was stated that the applicant's child had been registered in EMAS as a job seeker. A suitable vacancy from the vacancy database (registrar at the Mingachevir City Housing and Public Utility Services Production Association) was offered and accepted; accordingly, the referral to the vacancy and the data from the individual employment record were transmitted electronically to the employer, and the relevant information was also placed in the applicant's personal account. However, the employer did not provide any response to the referral.

As is evident from the examples provided, the mechanism for securing employment for citizens through EMAS is not sufficiently effective. Situations of this kind, particularly the failure of employers to respond to or take into consideration referrals issued by the competent executive authority, as well as the absence of statutory liability for such conduct, create difficulties in the realization of labor rights as established by the Constitution of Azerbaijan and other normative legal acts.

In this regard, it is necessary to introduce appropriate amendments to the legislation to ensure the mandatory execution of referrals, to establish liability for unjustified non-compliance with such referrals, and/or to provide individuals, in such cases, with unemployment insurance benefits.

Right to Social Security. This right, as an integral component of the human rights framework, constitutes a central element of the modern social state and has a universal character. Enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in the international treaties binding on the state, this right ensures access to social protection in situations of social risk, including illness, unemployment, temporary or permanent incapacity for work, old age, and other circumstances. Beyond the provision of social support, it serves as a legal basis for the protection of human dignity, promoting social justice, and ensuring equal opportunities for all while protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and facilitating their social inclusion.

During the reporting period, the related incoming applications, particularly those filed by vulnerable groups, were mainly about the assignment and payment of targeted state social assistance, access to the self-employment program, and the award or recalculation of pensions and social benefits.

(App.No.4796-25): Applicant G. complained that, despite applying for targeted state social assistance, no assessment of the family's living conditions had been conducted.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, the matter was investigated and the applicant's family was granted monthly social assistance of 284.72 AZN for the period from 1 March 2025 to 1 March 2026.

(App.No.5541-25): Applicant F. complained that, despite applying on 24 February 2025 for targeted state social assistance, no assessment of the family's living conditions were conducted and delays were occurred.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, the case was investigated and the family was granted monthly social assistance of 379.62 AZN for the period from 1 April 2025 to 1 April 2026.

(App.No.8061-25): Applicant U. reported that his application for targeted state social assistance was rejected despite submitting accurate information.

With the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, the application was examined, and the applicant's family was granted monthly assistance of 362.62 AZN for the period from 1 May 2025 to 1 May 2026.

Some applications addressed to the Ombudsman also included requests for financial assistance, holiday aid packages, or other forms of support for low-income families in difficult living conditions.

In response, applicants were provided with explanations of the relevant legal provisions, particularly those governing employment, targeted state social assistance and self-employment, and, where necessary,

inquiries were sent to local executive authorities to facilitate appropriate assistance to the families concerned (1838-25, 5545-25).

The self-employment program, which plays a key role in enabling low-income families to establish or develop small-scale economic activities and thereby generate sustainable income, continues to contribute to reducing unemployment, improving social welfare and promoting economic activity. In particular, expanding access to these programs for groups such as women, youth, PWDs and war participants supports the advancement of social equality and justice.

However, certain functional challenges persist in the implementation of the self-employment program. Under the “Rules on the Organization of Self-Employment,” approved by Resolution No. 168 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 13 May 2020, delays in the provision of assets required for establishing self-employment—following a positive decision by the relevant commission—have, in practice, led to prolonged procedures.

Such delays result in administrative inefficiencies and restrict beneficiaries from accessing alternative forms of employment and targeted social assistance during this period, thereby adversely affecting their financial situation.

(App.No.7672-25): Applicant A. applied to the Ombudsman’s Call Center, stating that his applications to the Aghjabadi district service office of the Karabakh Regional Employment Branch for the provision of assets (livestock) under the self-employment program had remained unsuccessful, and requesting assistance.

Following the Ombudsman’s intervention with the State Employment Agency under the MLSPP, the case was reviewed and, in accordance with the “Rules on the Organization of Self-Employment” approved by Resolution No. 168 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 13 May 2020, a decision was adopted by the local commission to enroll the applicant in the program, with further measures to be taken to provide the necessary assets.

(App.No.4675-25): Applicant Kh. complained that applications regarding the enrollment of a family member in the self-employment program had remained unsuccessful.

Following the Ombudsman’s intervention with the State Employment Agency under the MLSPP, the case was reviewed, and the applicant’s child was enrolled in the program under the “livestock farming” component and provided with the necessary assets.

In view of the above, as also noted in the Ombudsman’s 2024 Annual Report, it is necessary to establish a clear timeframe in the “Rules on the Organization of Self-Employment” between the decision to enroll a person in the program and the provision of the relevant assets.

Where setting such timeframes is not feasible, it is considered appropriate to remove restrictions preventing beneficiaries from accessing alternative forms of employment or applying for targeted state social assistance until the assets are provided.

Among applications to the Ombudsman concerning the right to social security were complaints about the non-payment or incorrect calculation of pensions and benefits, undue delays, and the failure to enforce court decisions on the restoration of social security rights—particularly delays in implementing judgments on the reinstatement of pensions and payment of arrears. The measures were taken to restore the violated rights in a number of cases.

(App.No.16072-25): Applicant V. complained that, upon retirement in April 2024, his pension had been calculated at a lower amount due to the exclusion of his 2006-2015 employment record from the system, and requested its inclusion and recalculation of his pension.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, the matter was reviewed, and the pension was recalculated taking into account the indexed pension capital of 34,724.30 AZN recorded in the insured portion of his individual account.

(App.No.3653-25): Applicant N. complained that, despite a decision of the Ganja Administrative Court granting him a second-degree indefinite disability status in connection with the defense of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, his pension had not been paid for the period from 31 December 2020 to 1 September 2024.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the MLSPP, the matter was reviewed and the unpaid pension arrears for the noted period (including the war veteran's stipend) were paid by adding them to the applicant's monthly pension.

(App.No.8000-25): Applicant M. complained that a decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the establishment of second-degree disability and the reinstatement of his suspended pension had not been enforced, and that his related appeals had remained unaddressed.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the MLSPP, the matter was reviewed and arrears amounting to 13,960.80 AZN for the period from 21 June 2023 to 30 June 2025 were calculated and scheduled for payment in monthly instalments of 581.70 AZN to the applicant's account.

(App.No.14533-25): Applicant T. complained that, despite commencing social leave on 9 February 2025, she had not received the relevant payments.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the MLSPP, the matter was reviewed, and it was established that the employer, "New Naftalan Hotel Company" LLC, had submitted the required documents for maternity benefits (10 February-15 June 2025) to the electronic insurance system; the benefit was subsequently processed on 25 August 2025 and transferred to the applicant's bank account.

(App.No.1917-25): Applicant R. complained that a court decision on the restoration of his second-degree disability had not been enforced.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the MLSPP, the decision was implemented and the applicant's labor pension was reinstated.

Right to Health. The right to health is a fundamental right, guaranteed by the Constitution and international law, that ensures the protection of every individual's physical and mental well-being.

This right extends beyond access to medical services to include the promotion of public health, disease prevention, healthy lifestyles, high standards of sanitation, and access to essential health information.

Ensuring the effective realization of the right to health by providing equal, uninterrupted access to healthcare services, preventing violations, restoring infringed rights, and raising public awareness constitutes one of the main areas of the Ombudsman's activities.

The incoming complaints about violations of the right to health were mainly about the worsening of patients' conditions due to medical negligence, limited access to specialized care in the regions, requests for assistance with state-funded examinations and treatment, and the failure of medical institutions to properly issue or complete referrals for disability assessments.

(App.No.506-25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman, alleging that medical negligence during a surgical procedure at the private "Zed Medical Center" caused serious health complications, and that the doctor had been practising unlawfully. The applicant requested that appropriate measures be taken.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Health, the matter was investigated, relevant

explanations were obtained, and it was established that the individual concerned lacked a legal basis to engage in medical practice. It was also reported that law enforcement authorities had initiated an investigation, and that appropriate measures were being taken to hold the medical institution administratively liable for operating without a licence.

The provision of healthcare services without appropriate medical education or the required authorization (licence) not only poses a serious threat to people's health, but also undermines public trust in the healthcare system, necessitating the strengthening of oversight mechanisms and legal accountability measures.

Analysis of complaints indicates that challenges in access to medical services in the regions persist.

(App.No.6144-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that he had not received the necessary medical care at Siyazan District Central Hospital and had been denied a referral to a hospital in Baku.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Management Union of Medical Territorial Units, the applicant was examined by a neurologist at the Clinical Medical Center, underwent a contrast-enhanced MRI scan, and expressed satisfaction with the medical services provided.

Complaints indicate that access to specialized medical services in the regions remains limited, with patients often reliant on facilities in the capital. Expanding regional services, ensuring balanced healthcare infrastructure, and improving primary care remain key priorities for the effective realization of the right to health.

It is necessary to expand the network of services for vulnerable groups, children, older persons, PWDs, and low-income families, taking into account their age, health status, social circumstances, and specific needs, including primary care, home-based services, specialized treatment, access to medicines, psychological support, and medical rehabilitation, as well as to strengthen measures to ensure barrier-free access to these services, improve and make the e-health system universally accessible, enhance the effectiveness of mandatory health insurance, and support service quality through continuous monitoring mechanisms.

The unequal distribution of medical doctors across regions in Azerbaijan, relative to population size, remains a key challenge to ensuring equal access to healthcare services. According to the State Statistical Committee's report "Healthcare, Social Protection and Housing Conditions in Azerbaijan", as of early 2025, the number of doctors per 10,000 population stood at 101.7 in Baku, compared to 24.5 in the Ganja-Dashkasan economic region, 14.9 in Nakhchivan, 13.0 in Guba-Khachmaz, 10.8 in Mountainous Shirvan, 9.7 in Lankaran-Astara, and 8.6 in the Mil-Mugan economic region. In particular, the very low number of doctors relative to the population in districts such as Dashkasan (8), Gadabay (61), Ujar (55), Zardab (47), Yardimli (39), and Lerik (38), along with a shortage of qualified personnel, is a matter of concern. This situation is one of the main factors hindering the implementation of the principle of universal access to medical and social care enshrined in the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Protection of Public Health," as well as the realization of citizens' right to quality and equitable healthcare.

There is a need to strengthen efforts to address chronic diseases and align healthcare services with modern international standards. Complaints and findings indicate gaps in the continuous provision of self-monitoring devices for persons with diabetes. This not only causes dissatisfaction but also poses risks, particularly for insulin-dependent patients, and undermines effective, sustained disease management.

In this context, it is important to update the normative framework regulating the scope of medical care and supply mechanisms for persons with diabetes in line with current requirements. In particular, Cabinet of Ministers Decision No. 87 of 13 May 2005 on the scope of annual medical care (including necessary examinations), as well as the list and quantities of insulin, other antidiabetic medicines, injection and self-monitoring devices, and the rules for their provision should be revised in light of recent comprehensive assessments, advances in medical science, and positive international practice (for example, in Turkey, the monthly norm for test strips for persons with type 1 diabetes is set at 150). Such updates could play a key role in addressing existing gaps in this area.

The Ombudsman's 2024 Annual Report included proposals to expand the range of services covered by mandatory health insurance and ensure that medicines prescribed for outpatient treatment are covered by insurance. This proposal has been taken into account. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers has established a normative framework for providing accessible medicines used in outpatient (home) settings under mandatory health insurance, including the compensation mechanism and the criteria for inclusion in and exclusion from the Services Package. This represents an important step in strengthening the legal and administrative foundations of the medicine supply system.

The rising number of drug addiction and substance abuse cases in the country in recent years is a matter of concern. These conditions pose serious risks to the physical and mental development of the younger generation, weaken the family institution, negatively affect the population's overall health, and threaten the health potential of future generations. According to the State Statistical Committee's 2025 report, the number of persons suffering from drug addiction increased from 2,723 to 4,967 over the past five years, while cases of substance abuse rose sharply from 122 to 1,091 during the same period. Such a significant increase constitutes not only a challenge to the protection of individual health rights but also a serious concern for public health and social stability, as it heightens the risk of crime and complicates the effective protection of rights. Strengthening preventive measures in this area therefore remains a key priority to safeguard both individual rights and broader societal interests.

Right to Mental Health. The right to mental health is a fundamental right, encompassing the protection of an individual's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, and ensuring the ability to lead a dignified and healthy life.

The effective implementation of this right is not limited to its recognition as a general principle; it also requires the existence of legal safeguards and oversight mechanisms to ensure its implementation. In this regard, strict compliance with legislative requirements in the provision of psychiatric care, the protection of individuals' rights, and the exercise of independent and institutional oversight are of particular importance.

Pursuant to Article 42 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Psychiatric Assistance," the Ombudsman carries out oversight of compliance with the rights and legitimate interests of individuals in the provision of psychiatric care.

In accordance with legislation, the Ombudsman and NPM members are entitled, at any time and without hindrance or prior notice, to enter psychiatric institutions; to meet and speak in private with persons held there, as well as with any other person who may provide relevant information, including, where necessary, in the presence of an expert or interpreter; to review and obtain copies of all documents confirming the legality of detention and relating to the treatment of and conditions for such persons; to draw up reports and record the course and outcomes of their activities; to use technical means to conduct photo, audio, and video recording; to be received promptly by the administration of psychiatric institutions; and to issue recommendations and receive responses within the specified timeframe.

In light of the abovementioned and the Ombudsman's mandate to protect human rights and prevent violations, a Working Group (WG) on "Mental Health and Human Rights" was established under the Ombudsman. The purpose of this group is to strengthen the protection of human rights in the field of mental health and to improve legal and institutional mechanisms through an effective cooperation platform involving state bodies, specialists, and CSOs. The WG comprises parliamentarians, the Rector of the Azerbaijan Medical University, representatives of the World Health Organization, various public institutions and CSOs, as well as mental health experts and staff of the Ombudsman Office.

The WG assesses the current situation in the field and carried out a public survey, taking into account gender balance and covering various age groups, as well as monitoring social media to examine attitudes toward persons with mental disorders, including issues of stigma and discrimination. The survey results indicate that seeking qualified psychological and psychiatric assistance remains a matter of hesitation and social concern. Respondents reported reluctance to seek professional help, citing fears of judgment by family members, colleagues, and neighbors, stigmatization of being called "mentally ill," and negative impacts on their personal and professional life. Some respondents reported that persons with mental

disorders, including those receiving psychiatric care, may be perceived as “dangerous” or “untrustworthy.” Overall, the findings suggest the persistence of stereotypes and stigmatizing attitudes in society regarding mental health and access to professional care.

In addition to the survey, widely used social media platforms were monitored. Given their significant role in communication and service delivery, the monitoring revealed that numerous individuals present themselves under titles such as “psychologist,” “parapsychologist,” “mental health expert,” or “therapist,” and offer psychological services, in some cases including elements of psychiatric care. Some of them avoid responding to questions about their professional qualifications. It was further found that individuals seeking advice or support were sometimes redirected to neurologists instead of psychiatrists. Individuals seeking help are often unable to distinguish between “psychologist,” “clinical psychologist,” “psychotherapist,” and “psychiatrist.”

Social media analysis indicates that stereotypes about professional psychiatric care remain widespread. Unsubstantiated claims regarding the adverse effects of prescribed medications, employment, and education are also prevalent. The findings indicate the need for mechanisms to prevent unauthorized provision of mental health services, including consultations and sessions, via the internet and social media.

In 2025, Ombudsman’s Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) conducted its first monitoring of rehabilitation centers providing for drug addictions, alcoholism, and gambling. While these centers play an important role in supporting mental health and facilitating the reintegration of affected individuals, the absence of medically trained staff poses a direct risk to patients’ rights to health and life, further exacerbated by weak oversight mechanisms. The selection, implementation, and evaluation of individualized rehabilitation programs in such centers also raise serious concerns among professionals.

Some centers shared images of individuals undergoing rehabilitation on social and printed media. Such materials, often used for promotional purposes, violate their right to privacy and may hinder reintegration. Similar practices were noted in child centers that offer speech therapy services and special education for children with autism spectrum disorders. Rehabilitation centers should be specially authorized and subject to regular oversight.

In psychiatric institutions under the Ministry of Health of Azerbaijan, overcrowding remains a problem. There are also significant waiting lists for treatment in narcological facilities. These institutions lack sufficient doctors, mid-level medical staff, and specialists in narcology and clinical psychology.

The analysis found gaps in staff awareness of their field and the applicable national and international legal norms and standards. The WG plans to conduct awareness-raising activities in these institutions. The WG is also translating key international instruments into the Azerbaijan language, including the UN Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care, to improve staff awareness.

At a meeting of the WG ahead of World Mental Health Day, the Ombudsman noted that the right to mental health includes access to medical care, protection from stigma and discrimination, and the ability to live in a safe and inclusive society. Drawing on UN principles, she emphasized the need to strengthen the legal framework, practical measures, and cooperation in mental health and provided an overview of the Ombudsman’s activities to protect mental health rights, including visits to and monitoring of psychiatric institutions.

At the event, proposals and recommendations were made to strengthen public awareness, reduce stigma, improve access to medical services, and address existing challenges in the field of mental health.

Right to Education. The right to education is a fundamental prerequisite for the implementation of human rights, ensuring equal access to quality education for all. Enshrined in the Constitution and international legal instruments, it extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills to include the protection of human dignity and the promotion of social, economic, and cultural development. The quality of education is measured by its alignment with established standards, socio-economic needs, and the interests of society and the State.

Preschool education, as the initial stage of the education system, ensures the physical and psychological development of children from an early age, their socialization, the identification and development of their talents and abilities, and the acquisition of basic work skills, while forming the foundation for their subsequent education.

Incoming applications indicate that difficulties persist in ensuring the right to education, particularly in placing children in preschool institutions. Limited capacity in many such institutions excludes many children, and in some areas, the absence of kindergartens remains a serious concern.

(App. No.6391-25): Applicant G. complained to the Ombudsman that the absence of a kindergarten in Çaylı village, where he resides, adversely affects children’s early development and creates difficulties for parents’ employment, and requested assistance in establishing a preschool facility.

Subsequently, the Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education. The case was reviewed, and the response indicated that allocations under the 2025 state budget investment expenditures had been distributed among priority repair and construction projects. The construction of a new kindergarten in Çaylı village, Gazakh district, will be considered within the state investment programs for the following year.

Applications indicate that parents, especially those who are employed, face difficulties placing children in preschool institutions; therefore, increasing the capacity of and ensuring accessibility in kindergartens is necessary.

From late 2025, a “School Bus” pilot project was launched in Baku to facilitate students’ transportation to and from general education institutions. While the project aims to ensure safe and convenient transport and reduce traffic congestion, the service fees limit access for low-income families. Given the planned expansion of the project in the next academic year, it is advisable to review the fees, taking into account the national subsistence minimum.

Under Article 33 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Education,” educators must observe ethical standards, uphold the dignity of the teaching profession, respect the honor and dignity of learners, protect children and youth from all forms of physical and psychological violence, and contribute to safeguarding their health and safety. However, failures by school administrations and teaching staff to properly fulfill these duties can lead to an unhealthy moral and psychological environment and negatively affect the educational process. Therefore, there is a need for continuous monitoring in educational institutions, including surveys among staff, students, and parents, to assess the actual situation.

(App. No.6864-25): Applicant complained to the Ombudsman that their child was insulted by a class teacher at Secondary School No. 7 named after Nizami Ganjavi in Sheki. The applicant stated that his appeals to the school principal were unsuccessful, leading to the child’s transfer to a distant school, and requested an investigation and appropriate legal measures.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education regarding this matter. The matter was reviewed, and in accordance with the applicable legislation, a relevant disciplinary measure was imposed on the teacher.

(App. No.2812-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman about legal violations at Tatalılar Village Secondary School in Beylagan District and requested assistance.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education in this regard. A monitoring inspection conducted at the school with the applicant’s participation by the Mil-Mugan Regional Education Department, which reveals deficiencies. Consequently, disciplinary measures were imposed on the school principal and the deputy principal for academic affairs.

(App. No.327-25): Applicant N. complained to the Ombudsman about irregularities at Baharlı-2 Settlement Secondary School, including violations of teachers’ rights, and requested an investigation and appropriate measures.

Following an inquiry to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of

Science and Education, the Karabakh Regional Education Department carried out a monitoring inspection. As a result of an inspection, disciplinary action was taken against the school principal for the identified violations.

Analysis of incoming education complaints highlights graduates of higher and secondary specialized education institutions sometimes face delays in obtaining their educational documents, which in turn creates difficulties in continuing their studies and entering the workforce.

(App. No.6805-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman about the failure by the Finance and Economics College under the Azerbaijan State University of Economics to provide him, as a graduate, with a diploma, and requested assistance.

Following an inquiry to the State Agency for Science and Higher Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, the matter was reviewed, and the relevant diploma blank was provided to the college for issuance in the applicant's name.

As is evident from the response, the necessary measures have been taken to address such complaints based on our requests to the State Agency for Science and Higher Education under the Ministry of Science and Education.

The rapid development of information technologies necessitates the application of modern innovations in education, as in other fields. In addition, the impact of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, on the quality of education, the formation of knowledge and skills, and individual development must be carefully considered. These tools should be promoted as supportive means for enhancing students' competencies, integrated into the learning process in a controlled and purposeful manner, and accompanied by the development of ethical and balanced usage skills.

The effective realization of the right to education depends not only on legal frameworks but also on the integration of modern technologies. Digital tools such as distance learning, e-resources, and AI-based assessment systems and inclusive learning environments expand access, but require safeguards for equal access, data protection, and security, supported by ongoing monitoring, awareness-raising, and cooperation among relevant stakeholders, including state authorities, educational institutions, and civil society, to ensure that this right is safely and effectively adapted to the modern challenges.

Right to Housing. The right to housing is a fundamental prerequisite for ensuring social protection, a dignified standard of living, the protection of property rights, and the exercise of other rights and freedoms. Access to adequate housing and safe, healthy living conditions is recognized as a fundamental right under international and national law.

The protection of citizens' housing rights, as well as the development of recommendations and suggestions to address existing challenges in ensuring this right, constitutes an important component of the Ombudsman's activities.

The incoming applications regarding the protection of housing rights mainly concern the provision of housing at the state's expense to privileged persons; preferential housing registration for war-related veterans with disabilities and families of martyrs; improved housing and relocation for internally displaced persons; allocation of land for private homes; and issues with substandard construction, poor building conditions, and maintenance.

The "First State Program on the Great Return to the Territories Liberated from Occupation of the Republic of Azerbaijan," approved by Presidential Order No. 3587 of 16 November 2022, provides for ensuring safe living conditions in settlements, building modern cities and villages, securing a dignified standard of living, implementing key infrastructure projects, and enabling sustainable resettlement. In line with the Program's Action Plan, the phased relocation of internally displaced families to newly built housing is ongoing.

The Ombudsman has investigated applications concerning assistance with the relocation of internally displaced people to the liberated territories and has taken the necessary measures.

(App. No. 5127-25): Applicant Y. submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman, stating that he is an internally displaced person from Kalbajar and is currently living with his family in inadequate housing in the Yukhari Aghjakand settlement of the Goranboy district. He further noted that his requests to the relevant authorities regarding relocation to the liberated territories had not been considered.

With the Ombudsman's applications to the Kalbajar District Executive Authority, the case was investigated. Given his difficult living conditions, he was placed on the housing list for the Aghdara district, and the case was referred to the State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons for further action.

(App. No. 11680-25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that he is an internally displaced person from the Kalbajar district and is currently living in difficult housing conditions, and requested assistance with relocation under the Great Return Program.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, it was established that the applicant is permanently registered in Keshdak village, Kalbajar district. His request to relocate to Hasanriz village in Aghdara district was recorded, and he was informed that it will be considered in accordance with existing procedures during future relocation phases.

The analysis of complaints shows that, in some cases, particularly in Baku, compensation provided to residents affected by construction works has been significantly below market value and insufficient to purchase comparable housing in the same area (because the compensation provided, especially for the original apartments, which were small is not enough to buy new ones). In some instances, properties were demolished without compensation, giving rise to justified grievances.

In addition, in some cases residents have been required to vacate their homes without consent or a court order, or have been forcibly evicted under pressure, including through disconnection of utilities, resulting in violations of their property and housing rights. The lack of sufficiently effective oversight mechanisms in this area further complicates the lawful resolution of such issues.

(App. No. 1347-25): Applicant K. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that, pursuant to Order No. 265 of the Baku City Executive Authority dated 2 December 2022, his home was demolished by "RR Construction" LLC using heavy machinery, his personal belongings were destroyed, and no compensation was paid. He requested that appropriate legal measures be taken.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry, the Baku City Executive Authority stated that the construction company had been instructed to ensure that demolition and relocation works were carried out in compliance with the law and on the basis of mutual agreement with residents.

In some applications, citizens stated that they lacked permanent housing and sufficient funds to purchase a home, and that their requests for land allocation to gradually build individual houses had not been considered. Following investigations, necessary measures were taken in a number of cases to address these requests.

(App. No. 3324-25): Applicant Q. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that his family has no place of residence and that his requests to the relevant authorities for the allocation of a land plot have remained unsuccessful. He requested appropriate assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's request to the Ganja Regional Justice Department of the Ministry of Justice, the matter was investigated. The Naftalan Municipality decided to initiate the allocation of a 0.02 ha land plot to the applicant for the construction of a private house, and applied to the No. 7 Barda Territorial Office of the State Cadastre and Real Estate Register for the preparation of the necessary documentation.

An extract from the State Register of Real Estate is a key legal document for the recognition and protection of ownership and other real rights. It confirms the legal status of the property, enables the owner to freely possess, use, and dispose of it, and serves as legal proof in disputes before courts and other authorities.

(App. No. 577-25): Applicant N. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that his request to the No. 5 Khachmaz Territorial Office of the State Cadastre and Real Estate Register for issuance of a document recognizing his ownership of a land plot purchased in 2022 had remained unresolved and seeking assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Service for Property Issues under the Ministry of Economy, the matter was investigated. The applicant's request for registration of the land plot was re-accepted for processing by the relevant territorial office, and an electronic extract from the State Register of Real Estate, along with a "Land Plot Plan and Measurement" document, was issued.

The State Agency for Housing Construction of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MIDA) expands access to housing by delivering modern, energy-efficient residential developments and offering homes on preferential terms, thereby improving the living conditions of young families, low-income households, and other vulnerable groups through state-supported social housing projects.

However, some complaints submitted to the Ombudsman have also raised issues regarding the technical condition and maintenance of residential buildings under MIDA's management. In these cases, inquiries addressed to the agency were resolved successfully.

(App. No. 17720-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman that he faced problems due to the poor construction quality of the building under MIDA's management and substandard repair works carried out in his apartment. He requested that appropriate legal measures be taken.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to MIDA, an investigation was conducted and the issues raised by the applicant were successfully resolved.

Consumer Protection. The protection of consumer rights constitutes an important indicator of social justice and, at the same time, serves as a fundamental guarantee of transparency and reliability in market relations. The implementation of these rights is of significant importance in ensuring that citizens are provided with safe and high-quality goods and services, in fostering fair market relations, in establishing a healthy competitive environment, and in promoting overall public welfare.

In 2025, as in previous years, the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan continued its efforts in consumer protection, collaborating with relevant state authorities and CSOs. The focus remained on the protection of consumer rights, the improvement of legislation, and public awareness in this area. In particular, incoming applications about the protection of consumer rights were investigated in accordance with the law, and, where necessary, relevant issues were raised before the competent state authorities. With regard to applications falling outside the Ombudsman's mandate, applicants were provided with legal advice.

Some consumers complained about the ineffectiveness of their appeals to competent authorities about telecommunications, internet, and public utility issues and about undue delay and administrative procrastination.

(App.No.596-25): Applicant O. complained to the Ombudsman that despite having submitted the required documents to the Lankaran Water Utility Administration regarding the installation of a water supply line to his/her residential address, the application had not been satisfied. With the intervention of the Ombudsman to the State Water Resources Agency, the matter was investigated, and the applicant's house was installed with a water supply line and a meter.

(App.No.955-25): Applicants N. and I. complained to the Ombudsman that their telephone lines were not functioning and that their appeals to the relevant authorities had not been considered.

As a result of the Ombudsman's request to Aztelekom LLC, the technical parameters of the relevant telephone lines used by the applicants were inspected by specialists. The detected faults were eliminated through repair works, and the proper functioning of the lines was restored.

(App.No.13697-25): Applicant F. complained to the Ombudsman that despite the installation of a new electricity meter at his residential address, the supply of electricity had not been restored and that appeals made to the relevant authorities had yielded no results.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to Azerishig OJSC, the employees of the company's territorial structural unit restored the electricity supply to the apartment.

(App.No.15461-25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman that the electricity pole supplying power to his home was in a hazardous condition, and that appeals to the relevant authority had remained without response.

With the intervention of the Ombudsman with the Azerishig OJSC, technical measures were carried out by the company's staff. One defective support of the 0.4 kV transmission line was replaced with a new support. Thus, the applicant's complaint was thereby successfully resolved.

(App.No.15663-25): Applicant S. complained to the Ombudsman that irrigation water intended for supply to his village had not been provided and that appeals to the relevant authorities remained ineffective.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Water Resources Agency, the matter was investigated, and the area was subsequently supplied with water under a planned irrigation schedule.

(App.No.16180-25): Applicants R. and others complained to the Ombudsman that the elevator in their building was not functioning and that their appeals to the relevant authorities had yielded no result.

With the intervention of the Ombudsman's appeal to the Liftrepair Production Union under the Baku City Executive Authority, the condition of the elevator was inspected, the necessary repair, adjustment, and calibration works were carried out, its safe operation was verified, and it was put back into service.

According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Protection of Consumer Rights", a consumer has the right to require that the quality of goods purchased (work performed or services rendered) by the seller (manufacturer or service provider) complies with normative documents and the terms of the contract, and that such goods (work or services) correspond to the information provided by the seller (manufacturer or service provider).

Some incoming applications were about failures to provide consumers with services of adequate quality, the lack of remedial action by the relevant authorities to address existing deficiencies, as well as the unjustified charging of fees for the provision of certain services. As a consequence of the investigations conducted, the identified violations were eliminated.

(App.No.2148-25): Applicant N. complained to the Ombudsman that despite timely payment of the monthly subscription fee for internet services, the internet speed had decreased, and that his/her applications to the "170" Call Center of Aztelekom LLC remained ineffective.

As a result of an inquiry sent by the Ombudsman to the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, the parameters of the applicant's telephone line and internet performance indicators were examined by specialists. The identified faults were eliminated, and the internet connection, operating at the prescribed speed, was ensured.

(App.No.14431-25): Applicant F. complained to the Ombudsman that due to non-compliant voltage levels in the electricity supply at his home, household appliances had been damaged, and that although he appealed to the relevant authorities, his problem was not solved.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to Azerishig OJSC, the company's representatives conducted an on-site inspection and carried out measurement works. Technical measures were implemented at substations to eliminate the problem, the voltage was brought within the standard range, and the area was subsequently provided with a stable, high-quality, and uninterrupted electricity supply.

(App.No.5524-25): Applicant V. complained to the Ombudsman that despite regularly paying the subscription fee for his telephone line, an internet line had been installed without his consent and an additional fee had been unjustifiably charged.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, the applicant was invited to the Goranboy office of the Central Aran Regional Branch of Aztelekom LLC for the completion of documentation procedures necessary to ensure access to telecommunication services. The documentation process was finalized, and the applicant was duly provided with telecommunication services.

The applicant further noted that, with the interventions of the Ombudsman, the issue had been resolved without any payment being required and thanked the Ombudsman for the assistance.

A number of applications submitted to the Ombudsman were about the protection of consumer rights, the suspension of services without prior notice to consumers and the imposition of unjustified charges

(App.No.8787-25): Applicant, G. filed a complaint with the Ombudsman stating that employees of the Bilasuvar service department of the Lankaran Regional Gas Operation Office had disconnected the natural gas supply to his residence without prior notice or any known justification.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry to the "Azerigaz" Production Union regarding the complaint, the natural gas supply to the applicant's address was fully restored.

(App.No.4288-25): Applicant, P. filed a complaint with the Ombudsman stating that his previous appeals to "Azeristiliktachizat" OJSC regarding the cancellation of an unfounded debt and the correction of billing discrepancies had remained unresolved.

With the Ombudsman's intervention with "Azeristiliktachizat" OJSC, it was determined that the apartment in question did not utilize centralized heating services, and the outstanding debt for heating services was subsequently canceled.

The incoming complaints regarding violations of consumer rights by entrepreneurs and companies were investigated in collaboration with the State Service for Antimonopoly and Consumer Market Control under the Ministry of Economy, in accordance with the legislation. In some cases, these violations were effectively remedied.

(App.No.4310/3-25): Applicant, Z. petitioned the Ombudsman regarding a violation of consumer rights by a mobile phone retailer. The applicant stated that previous appeals to the relevant authorities had been unsuccessful and that the entrepreneur had failed to issue a full refund.

With the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Service for Antimonopoly and Consumer Market Control, the merchant was required to refund the remaining balance to the applicant.

The protection of consumer rights within the banking and insurance sectors is a critical pillar of modern market relations, playing a vital role in ensuring economic security, social justice, and financial stability. The relevant incoming complaints, which were particularly about breaches of contractual obligations,

unlawful deductions, and bureaucratic delays, were investigated within the scope of the mandate. Consequently, necessary measures were taken to restore the infringed rights of the complainants.

(App.No.2458-25): Applicant, F., filed a complaint with the Ombudsman expressing dissatisfaction with a 100% deduction applied to their salary by the International Bank of Azerbaijan.

With the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Central Bank of Azerbaijan, the restoration of 579.5 AZN to the citizen's card account was successfully ensured.

(App.No.13704-25): Applicant, A., filed a complaint with the Ombudsman stating that a restriction had been placed on their deposit account at "Kapital Bank" OJSC and that previous appeals to the bank had yielded no results.

With the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Central Bank, the restriction on the current account linked to the citizen's deposit agreement was successfully removed.

(App.No.1427-25): Applicant, R., petitioned the Ombudsman, stating that the Agricultural Insurance Fund insured his apple orchard. He reported that heavy rains in 2024 caused significant damage to the orchard, yet his appeals to the Fund had remained unresolved.

The Ombudsman inquired the Central Bank, which resulted in ensuring the payment of an insurance indemnity amounting to 5,871.85 AZN to the citizen.

In the modern era, the rapid evolution of information technology presents both new opportunities and significant challenges for consumer rights protection. The rise of e-commerce, digital payment systems, online service platforms, and the integration of artificial intelligence has transformed the nature of consumer relations, necessitating a modernization of protection mechanisms. In particular, data processing and the protection of personal information have become central pillars of contemporary consumer law.

In this regard, it is of paramount importance to conduct continuous monitoring of the impact of modern technologies on consumer rights. Furthermore, existing legislation, specifically the Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Protection of Consumer Rights" and "On Electronic Commerce," along with other normative legal acts, should be harmonized with modern requirements based on international best practices. Additionally, the development of educational materials and the organization of joint awareness-raising initiatives tailored to specific target groups remain essential.

1.3. Protection of the rights of population groups

Rights and Freedoms of Azerbaijanis Displaced from Armenia. The Ombudsman has raised the problems of compatriots forcibly expelled from the territory of Armenia as a result of ethnic cleansing, including their right of return at international events, with a view to ensuring the intensive implementation of measures taken to protect their rights.

The international and regional human rights organizations have been called upon to take a firm position in accordance with international law. In addition, the Ombudsman has organized international-level events to facilitate discussions on resolving the problems faced by displaced persons and restoring their violated rights.

The Ombudsman addressed an open letter to international and regional human rights organizations, ombudspersons, and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) of other countries concerning Armenia's ethnic cleansing and deportation of Azerbaijanis on the grounds of racial discrimination and hatred in order to ensure that the issue receives due attention by international organizations as a serious human rights violation, and that relevant practical measures are taken. In the letter, the Ombudsman urged international organizations to investigate and provide a legal assessment of statements by Armenia's former president,

Levon Ter-Petrosyan, circulated in the media and on social networks, which were made during the event and in which he acknowledged the forced expulsion of Azerbaijanis from Armenia, as well as the deliberate commission of massacres in Karabakh and surrounding territories under his leadership. The Ombudsman also set out specific demands regarding the prevention of hate policies and called for support for the safe and dignified return of Azerbaijanis to their homes, as well as for the restoration of their violated rights.

In addition, the Ombudsman addressed a special letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees regarding ensuring the right of return of Azerbaijanis deported from Armenia. The letter stated that our compatriots had been forcibly expelled from their lands and subjected to systematic ethnic cleansing in violation of international law. Referring to international instruments enshrining the right of return, including UNGA Resolution 194, it emphasized that this right applies not only to those forcibly displaced but also to their family members and future descendants, and highlighted the recognition of their right to compensation. The Ombudsman of Azerbaijan requested the UNHCR to take the necessary measures within his mandate to support the recognition of the right of return of these persons; to ensure their safe and dignified return, restoration of citizenship, and the right to compensation for lost or destroyed property, to support their reintegration, and to call upon Armenia in this regard. The letter also called for raising this issue on UN platforms and for its inclusion in relevant reports, programs, and strategic documents concerning deported Azerbaijanis.

The Ombudsman sent a letter to the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch regarding biased information on Azerbaijan in its 2024 report. She noted the exclusion of the situation of Azerbaijanis, who were forcibly expelled from Armenia, referring to it as a double standard, and calling for reporting on verified facts.

The Ombudsman also wrote an open letter to the Secretary General of Amnesty International regarding the distorted information on Azerbaijan in its 2024 report. She expressed concern over the HRW failure to address the right of return of Azerbaijanis, who were forcibly expelled from Armenia since 1987 and Armenia's failure to comply with its obligations under relevant international instruments. The Ombudsman further emphasized the importance of Armenia providing guarantees for the safe and dignified return of Azerbaijanis to their long-standing places of habitual residence.

The Ombudsman initiated, in cooperation with the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the International Center for Ottoman Studies, a conference entitled "Constitutional Foundations and Historical Aspects of the Right to National Identity". At the event, the Ombudsman called Armenia's policy of ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis, and erasure of their traces of historical presence in those territories, a manifestation of ethnic hatred.

At the conference, attended by members of the Western Azerbaijan Community, attention was drawn to the repeated deportation of Azerbaijanis in the twentieth century, the destruction of their historical and religious heritage, and their rights under international conventions, including the right of return.

The Ombudsman also raised this issue at meetings with international counterparts. For example, at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA), the Ombudsman addressed the human rights impact of forced migration, noting the displacement of Azerbaijanis from their ancestral lands and violations of their fundamental rights.

At the meetings of the OICOA Board of Directors and General Assembly held in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ombudsman also brought this issue to the participants' attention and provided detailed information on measures taken to ensure the right of return.

This issue was also raised during the International Symposium of Ombudsmen on "Strengthening the Rule of Law: The Role of Ombudsmen and NHRIs," held in Baku at the Ombudsman's initiative. The event also included a panel session on "Strengthening International Cooperation in the Protection of Refugees' Rights and Best Practices".

In addition, within the framework of the symposium, an exhibition entitled “Unsilenced Truths” on ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis was held. It featured original documents from the personal archives of Azerbaijanis born, educated, and employed in Armenia, including birth certificates, passports, diplomas, employment records, marriage certificates, service IDs, graduation photo albums, official certificates, postal notifications, and other materials. The exhibition also included books and printed materials on the historical, religious, and cultural heritage of Azerbaijanis in present-day Armenia, as well as publications on deportation policies. Presented in Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, English, Spanish, and Italian, the exhibition attracted particular interest from international participants.

Throughout 2025, the Ombudsman hosted international events and meeting with foreign guests, during which the exhibition “Unsilenced Truths” was displayed.

In the foreword to the book “Lovers of Victory: The Martyrs of Garakilse (Black church)” dedicated to compatriots who were killed, went missing, or whose fundamental rights were violated as a result of Armenia’s policy of violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide against Azerbaijanis, the Ombudsman drew attention to the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis and emphasized the importance of ensuring the right of return of those affected and their descendants.

Protection of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees, and Migrants: The implementation of the rights of refugees, formerly internally displaced persons (IDPs), and others in similar situations remains a priority for the Ombudsman and their challenges have been discussed at local, regional, and international events.

During the year, incoming applications by former IDPs regarding their return to liberated territories, improving their housing and living conditions, employment, and legal status (recognition of IDP status), assignment of the unified monthly allowance, and other related issues were reviewed, and appropriate measures were taken.

(App. No. 17342-25): Applicant, a former IDP, A., requested the Ombudsman’s assistance to include his family in the resettlement list for liberated territories. Following the Ombudsman’s intervention with the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, the applicant and his family were added to the list for relocation to Aghdam.

(App. No. 8821-25): Applicant, a former IDP, E., requested the Ombudsman’s assistance with relocation to Aghdam as an IDP family.

As a result of the Ombudsman’s intervention, the applicant, his spouse, and three children were resettled in a three-room home in Kangarli village, Aghdam, and his mother was also relocated to a two-room home in the same village.

(App. No. 5465-25): Applicant, a former IDP, M., requested the Ombudsman’s assistance in enforcing a decision of the Sheki Administrative Court regarding the granting of IDP status.

Following the Ombudsman’s intervention, the applicant’s request was granted.

Within the framework of the “First State Program on the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan,” some settlements are not planned for restoration at the current stage, making it impossible for certain former IDP families registered there and residing in Baku to return directly to their original places of registration. In addition, the lack of available housing in settlements established in Baku for the temporary accommodation of IDPs further prevents their direct relocation. As a result, these families are initially relocated to other regions, which creates difficulties in their socio-economic conditions, continuity of employment, and the uninterrupted access of their children to education.

(App. No. 15782-25): Thus, in a collective application filed by 36 persons in total, received by the Ombudsman, a group of former IDP families from Jabrayil, temporarily settled in the “Spartak” pioneer camp in the Khazar district of Baku, stated that they were planned to be relocated not to their registered place of origin, Jabrayil, but to the Bilasuvar district at the initial stage.

The applicants, during a group meeting at the Ombudsman Office, concerned about the planned relocation. They noted that they currently have permanent jobs in Baku and that their children are studying there.

They stated that a two-stage relocation, first to Bilasuvar and then to Jabrayil, would negatively affect their living conditions, socio-economic situation, and their children's education.

They therefore requested to be allowed to remain temporarily in their current place of residence until relocation to Jabrayil is ensured.

As a result of the investigation of the appeal, the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons stated that no vacant housing is available in IDP settlements in Baku, making it impossible to provide these families with housing there. It was also noted that the restoration of the relevant settlements in the Jabrayil district is not considered under the First State Program. The Committee further indicated that former IDPs will be provided with newly built housing in the liberated territories on a phased basis, according to their registered cities and districts.

The Ombudsman considers it appropriate to take these issues into account during the relocation of former IDPs.

Furthermore, attention was given to protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, with continued measures to ensure the rights of foreigners, stateless persons, asylum seekers, and others involved in migration processes.

It should be noted that, based on the applications addressed to the Ombudsman by individuals residing in our country with refugee status, certain difficulties have been observed in their use of electronic services.

(App. No. 18440-25): Applicant M., who was granted refugee status by the State Migration Service (18440-25), complained to the Ombudsman that he was unable to access electronic services because his ID was not recognized in the "E-Police" mobile application.

It was found that while the system includes data of individuals with temporary and permanent residence permits, it does not cover persons with refugee status.

With the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it was stated that from 2026, necessary steps will be taken to enable access to the "E-Police" app for foreign nationals with various statuses, after which they will be able to use electronic services through the application and the official portal.

The incoming applications received by the Ombudsman concerning acquisition, termination, and restoration of citizenship, registration of foreigners at their place of stay, issuance and extension of temporary and permanent residence permits, and work permits for paid employment were reviewed, and appropriate legal measures were ensured.

(App. No. 17603-25): Applicant F., a citizen of the Russian Federation, complained to the Ombudsman requesting assistance with obtaining Azerbaijani citizenship.

Following the Ombudsman's interventions with the State Migration Service, the applicant's petition for citizenship was forwarded to the Commission on Citizenship Issues under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for consideration.

(App. No. 7275-25): Applicant Y., a minor, and his brother S., citizens of Afghanistan, complained to the Ombudsman, stating that their father had been detained and a deportation decision issued against them for residing without valid documents. They noted that they are currently continuing their education in

Azerbaijan and requested permission to remain temporarily.

With the intervention with the State Migration Service, they were allowed to stay in the country for a certain period to complete their education.

Within the framework of cooperation with foreign ombudspersons and diplomatic missions, the Ombudsman facilitated the issuance of return certificates by Azerbaijan's diplomatic missions abroad to nationals residing irregularly in foreign countries, enabling their return home. In addition, assistance was provided to foreigners in returning to their countries of origin.

(App. No. 17228-25): Applicant T. applied to the Ombudsman requesting assistance in returning his son, who had been detained in Krasnodar, Russian Federation, for violating migration regulations.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry to the relevant authorities, the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Russian Federation issued a return certificate to his son.

(App.No.16593-25): Applicant A., a citizen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, lodged a file with the Ombudsman stating that, despite his minor child holding a valid Dutch passport, the child was not allowed to leave Azerbaijan.

As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Border Service, the child was permitted to leave the country with their mother.

Amid current global challenges, the Ombudsman has continuously monitored issues concerning persons, including children, seeking refuge in the country due to armed conflicts, crises, and other emergencies, and has taken appropriate measures to protect their rights and well-being.

(App. No. 2294-25): Applicant P., a citizen of the State of Israel, applied to the Ombudsman, stating that he arrived in Baku on 23 August 2023 and was unable to return due to the war situation in his country, requesting assistance to reside legally in Azerbaijan.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Migration Service, the request was granted.

Members of the Ombudsman's NPG and Independent Monitoring Group regularly visited the temporary accommodation centers of the State Migration Service and conducted ongoing monitoring. They held discussions with detainees, reviewed documents, and assessed living and sanitary conditions, as well as met with facility management. Each person was applied an individual approach based on their needs and appropriate assistance was provided within the Ombudsman's mandate.

On the eve of 18 December, International Migrants Day, a number of awareness-raising activities were carried out on the Ombudsman's initiative, providing broad information on the Ombudsman's work in protecting migrants' rights, and a related article by the Ombudsman was published in the press.

Protection of the rights of martyr families and war veterans. Protection of the rights of martyr families and war participants is a key priority of our country's social policy, focusing on improving their welfare and ensuring comprehensive care and support.

Ensuring the rights and addressing the problems of martyr families, war veterans, and persons disabled in the defense of the territorial integrity, independence, and constitutional order of our state are key priorities of the Ombudsman's activities.

The incoming applications by war veterans were mainly about difficulties in obtaining the title and certificate of "War Veteran of the Republic of Azerbaijan," as well as in the assignment and payment of related

allowances, along with issues related to labor, healthcare, and the right to petition. Appropriate investigations were conducted, and necessary measures were taken in accordance with the law.

(App.No.1659-25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman that he had participated in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War but that his requests for the war veteran status had remained unresolved.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the case was reviewed and the applicant was awarded the "War Veteran" title and certificate for his participation in the counteroffensive and the liberation of the occupied territories.

(App.No.16325/2-25): Applicant A. complained to the Ombudsman that, despite being granted war veteran status, he had not received the certificate and his relevant requests had yielded no results.

Following an inquiry to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the relevant commission investigated the matter and the applicant was provided with a certificate by the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The received applications highlight that, in some cases, although courts rulings are in favor of applicants on the war veteran status and certificates, the decisions have not been enforced, resulting in undue delays.

(App. No. 8573-25): Applicant Z. complained to the Ombudsman that a decision of the Baku Administrative Court on granting "War Veteran" status and a certificate had not been enforced.

Following an inquiry to the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, the case was examined and according to the letter of response, it was found that the applicant's service in the relevant areas specified in paragraph 10 of Part 1 of Resolution No. 216 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 22 September 1995 was not confirmed; according to the protocol issued by the relevant commission, it was deemed inappropriate to proceed with awarding the war veteran status. Subsequently, a repeated submission to the Ministry of Defense due to the failure to enforce a final court decision, the applicant was included in the list by the Commission on the Assignment of Veteran Status and Issuance of Certificates operating under the Ministry, and the list was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval.

The received applications by the Ombudsman were issues concerning the social security, labor and other rights of war participants. Following investigations and measures taken in respect of these complaints, the restoration of rights was ensured.

(App. No. 7336-25): Applicant Ch. complained to the Ombudsman that her child had participated in the Patriotic War, subsequently experienced serious health deterioration, and that her requests to the relevant authorities for referral to determine disability status had remained ineffective.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry, the measures taken resulted in the review of the applicant's child's medical records by the Medical Advisory Commission of the Jalilabad District Central Hospital, the formal issuance of a referral for medical-social expert assessment, and an evaluation by the Medical-Social Expert Commission under the State Agency for Medical-Social Expertise and Rehabilitation of the MLSPP. As a result, a second-degree disability (65%) was established for the period from 30 April 2025 to 30 April 2027.

Pursuant to Article 9 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Veterans, veterans are entitled, while receiving a pension, to continue their employment in their former workplace or in any other enterprise, institution or organization regardless of ownership, to engage in entrepreneurial activity, and to establish enterprises based on any form of economic activity. Except in cases prescribed by law, any restriction on veterans' employment, entrepreneurial or other socially beneficial activities is prohibited.

(App. No. 10479-25): Applicant R. complained that, despite passing professional exams and holding the required diploma, he had not been appointed to an electrical fitter position at Azerishiq OJSC, and his

appeals had gone unanswered.

With the Ombudsman's intervention, and in view of his status as a patriotic war participant, he was appointed to the position.

In several cases, the Ombudsman investigated complaints from war veterans concerning interruptions or delays in the payment of the Presidential stipend of the Republic of Azerbaijan, resulting in the restoration of those payments.

(App. No. 7718-25): Applicant Kh. complained that the Presidential stipend of the Republic of Azerbaijan assigned to him as a war veteran had not been paid, and that his prior appeals had remained unsuccessful.

As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, the matter was reviewed, and the stipend was fully calculated and paid for the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 October 2024.

(App. No. 15595-25): Applicant I. complained that his Presidential stipend as a war veteran had been suspended since 1 January 2022.

With the Ombudsman's intervention with the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, the stipend was reinstated from 1 October 2024, and arrears were paid by adding them to the applicant's monthly stipend.

In addition, applications submitted to the Ombudsman concerning the protection of other rights of war participants were examined, and in a number of cases the issues raised were resolved.

(App. No. 3690/2-25): Applicant M. complained that, despite his status as a war veteran, his applications to the "Hunanlar" municipality of the Tovuz district for the allocation of a land plot had remained unexamined.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the Shamkir Regional Justice Department of the Ministry of Justice, the matter was reviewed, and the "Hunanlar" municipality adopted a decision to allocate a 0.08 ha residential land plot to the applicant's ownership.

Under the "Rules on the Perpetuation of the Name of Martyrs and the Application of Benefits to Martyrs' Families," approved by Decision No. 10 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 15 January 1994, local executive authorities are tasked with ensuring the protection and upkeep of battle and burial sites, as well as tombstones and memorial monuments. However, incoming complaints indicated that certain memorials were in a state of neglect, necessitating appropriate remedial measures.

(App. No. 17122-25): Applicant H. complained that a monument erected in a residential area of Sumgait in memory of his father, who was martyred in the First Karabakh War, was in a state of disrepair and requested assistance with its restoration.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the Sumgait City Executive Authority, the monument was inspected and fully restored, including repainting of inscriptions and images and replacement of damaged marble elements.

Pursuant to Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Perpetuation of the Name of Martyrs and Benefits Granted to Martyrs' Families," family members of a martyr include spouses, parents, children under 18, as well as children over 18 whose disability was established before reaching 18, siblings, and individuals raised in orphanages. Those enrolled in vocational, secondary specialized, or higher education institutions are considered family members until the completion of their studies, but not beyond the age of 23. Grandparents are also included where there is no person legally obliged to support them.

However, some incoming complaints about violations of the right to education indicated that applicants were removed from the category of tuition fee-exempt students upon reaching the age of 23, despite their status

as members of martyrs' families. They further reported that, due to financial constraints, they were unable to continue their studies and sought appropriate assistance.

Thus, the Ombudsman recommends increasing the age limit of 23 specified in Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Perpetuation of the Name of Martyrs and Benefits Granted to Martyrs' Families" for individuals pursuing vocational, secondary specialized, and higher education in order to enhance the effective enjoyment of the right to education of members of martyrs' families.

Protection of the Rights of Military Servicemen. Measures to improve the quality of material and technical provision within the Armed Forces, to strengthen discipline, patriotism, and combat capability of military units, as well as to improve their and family members social conditions, have been continued.

The Ombudsman continued joint activities with the Ministry of Defense, the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Civil Defense Troops of the Ministry of Emergency Situations to assess the situation regarding the protection of the rights of military personnel and their social and living conditions, as well as to conduct legal awareness-raising activities among the personnel.

Incoming applications filed by military personnel and their family members were mainly about the provision of housing for military personnel; delays in discharge from the Armed Forces into the reserve; failure to ensure the timely payment of monetary compensation specified by legislation to military personnel (excluding conscripts performing compulsory active military service) for unused leave days and clothing/property allowances accrued during service; shortcomings in the assessment of the health status of conscripts; and existing problems in certain aspects of the social protection of military personnel, as well as, in some cases, delays by executive authorities in issuing the relevant documentation.

Analysis of the applications shows that, for various reasons, including the completion of service, family circumstances, health conditions, and other grounds, applications submitted by certain military personnel (excluding conscripts performing compulsory active military service) seeking discharge from the Armed Forces into the reserve have yielded no results. Following the Ombudsman's inquiries to the competent authorities in relation to such complaints, the majority of those military personnel were subsequently discharged into the reserve from the Armed Forces.

(App. No. 1082-25)/ (App. No. 532-25): Applicants N. and O. lodged complaints with the Ombudsman, stating that their applications submitted to the relevant authorities for discharge from active military service into the reserve yielded no results.

Following the Ombudsman's interventions with the Ministry of Defense in relation to these complaints, the applicants were discharged from active military service into the reserve by the relevant orders, pursuant to subparagraph "j" of Article 156 of the Regulation on Military Service (upon their request).

Following the Ombudsman's interventions with the competent authorities in relation to other similar complaints (O-532-25, M-5344-25, M-5038/2-25, M-17834-25, H-16336-25, Θ-16342-25, A-17764-25, A-20087-25, M-18465-25, etc.), a number of military personnel were discharged from active military service into the reserve, while, in other cases, the relevant documentation procedures for their discharge into the reserve were initiated.

The incoming applications related to military personnel were also complaints about the failure to grant requests for a change of place of military service, despite the existence of grounds provided by legislation.

(App. No.8911-25): Applicant S. addressed the Ombudsman, stating that his applications and those submitted by his son, who serves in military unit "N" located in the Goranboy district, to the relevant authorities, seeking a change of his son's place of service due to family circumstances, had not been examined, and requesting assistance in resolving the matter.

With the intervention of the Ombudsman with the Ministry of Defense in relation to the complaint, the applicant's son's place of service was changed in accordance with subparagraph "z" of Article 72 (where

there is a need to change the place of service due to the health condition of family members) and subparagraph “b” of Article 78 of the Regulation on Military Service, and he was appointed to an equivalent position corresponding to his specialty in one of the military institutions located in Baku, where his family resides.

(App. No. 2201-25): Applicant R. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that he resides in rented accommodation in the city of Sumgait and serves as a squad commander in military unit “N” of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, located in the Bilajari settlement, Binagadi district.

He further indicated that he is the legal guardian of his spouse, who suffers from cancer, is bedridden, and has a first-degree disability, and that he has three minor children under his care. He requested assistance in being reassigned to another position within a body subordinated to the Ministry, located closer to his place of residence and operating under a shift-based work regime.

Following the Ombudsman’s request to the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the applicant was appointed to an appropriate position at the Sumgait Regional Center of the Ministry, to which the military unit in which he served is subordinated.

Certain former military personnel (Z-8234-25, Ə-18667-25, N-19019-25, H-19277-25, H-19895-25, etc.) lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, stating that, as the grounds for their discharge into the reserve were indicated as “service incompatibility” in the relevant orders, they had subsequently been unable to secure employment elsewhere and were experiencing unemployment, which constitutes a matter of concern.

As a consequence of the measures taken in relation to incoming applications regarding the provision of assistance with the payment of monetary compensation for unused leave days and clothing/property allowances accrued during active military service, the issues raised were addressed.

Certain discharged military servicemen (A-6665-25, A-8073-25, A-16989-25, S-18256-25, etc.) complained to the Ombudsman, stating that they had not been paid the monetary compensation provided by legislation for unused leave days accrued during their military service, and that their relevant applications submitted to the competent authorities yielded no results. With the Ombudsman’s interventions with the Ministry of Defense and the State Border Service, payment of compensation for unused leave days was ensured for the majority of the applicants, while, in other cases, the necessary measures were taken to facilitate such payments.

Some military servicemen (A-3421-25, A-6665-25, A-8073-25, B-422/7-25, N-1754-25, İ-4607-25, S-8582-25, M-9608-25, H-11405-25, X-16537-25, B-17696-25, A-16909-25, S-18260-25, 18793-25, A-16909-25, 11090/3-25, A-18995-25, A-18880-25, C-18799-25, N-18756-25 etc.) filed complaints with the Ombudsman, stating that they had not been paid the monetary compensation prescribed by legislation for unused clothing and property allowances accrued during their military service, and that their applications submitted to the competent authorities yielded no results. With the Ombudsman’s interventions with the competent authorities in relation to these complaints, payment of compensation for unused clothing and property allowances was ensured for the majority of the applicants, while, in other cases, the necessary measures were taken to facilitate such payments.

In a number of applications, applicants stated that, despite the existence of grounds set forth in legislation for deferment from compulsory active military service (including for the purposes of continuing education, as well as on health and family grounds), local bodies of the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription had unjustifiably prepared them for dispatch to military service. With the Ombudsman’s interventions in relation to such complaints, the Service conducted relevant investigations; in certain cases, the allegations indicated in the applications were confirmed, and appropriate measures were taken to restore the violated rights.

(App. No. 15247-25): Applicant O. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that her spouse was conscripted into compulsory active military service and assigned to military unit “N”. She indicated that, despite submitting relevant documentation confirming that she has three children under her care, her spouse was not discharged from military service into the reserve on family circumstances, and requested assistance.

With the Ombudsman’s intervention with the Ministry of Defense regarding this matter, the applicant’s spouse was discharged from active military service into the reserve pursuant to subparagraph “d” of Article 156 of the Regulation on Military Service.

(App. No. 17935-25): Applicant A. lodged an application with the Ombudsman, stating that his son’s health condition was objectively assessed and that he was being prepared for conscription into compulsory active military service, and requesting assistance in ensuring his re-examination.

With the Ombudsman’s intervention with the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription, the applicant’s son was referred by the Central Military Medical Commission for additional examination to the Republican Clinical Hospital named after M.A. Mirgasimov. In connection with the diagnosis of “open bite; mild impairment of chewing function,” he was, on 09.10.2025, assessed pursuant to Article 51 “d” of the Schedule of Diseases as “unfit for military service in peacetime and fit with limitations in wartime.”

(App. No. 17459-25): Applicant filed a complaint to the Ombudsman, stating that, despite having a third-degree disability due to an eye condition and having submitted the relevant supporting documents to the competent authorities, his fitness for military service had been assessed on the basis of other medical conditions rather than his eye condition. He further expressed dissatisfaction with the granting of a six-month deferment, indicated that his appeal against the decision had not been examined and that no response had been provided, and requested appropriate assistance.

In response to the Ombudsman’s inquiry addressed to the MLSPP in this regard, it was indicated that the applicant had undergone an ophthalmological examination and, based on the diagnosis of “keratoconus,” a decision had been taken to confirm the ground of unfitness indicated in the referral under a different category, “C” (unfit for military service in peacetime and fit with limitations in wartime), and he had been referred to the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription for certification.

Several applications indicated that serving military personnel had serious health conditions, and assistance was requested to facilitate their re-examination to determine fitness for military service.

With the Ombudsman’s interventions with the competent authorities, the military personnel concerned were re-examined; in some cases, they were found “unfit for military service in both peacetime and wartime,” while in others, they were “unfit for military service in peacetime and fit with limitations in wartime,” and were accordingly discharged early from military service on health grounds.

(App. No. 8487-25): For example, applicant N. reached the Ombudsman, stating that his son, who suffers from thalassemia and is currently performing compulsory active military service, was not properly medically assessed at the time of conscription, and requested assistance in ensuring his re-examination.

Following the Ombudsman’s request to the Ministry of Defense, the applicant’s son was re-examined and, pursuant to the Regulation on Military Medical Examination approved by Decision No. 59 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 29.02.2008, was diagnosed as “unfit for military service in both peacetime and wartime” and diagnosed with a “general disease.”

Similarly, following the Ombudsman’s intervention with the Ministry of Defense in relation to a similar complaint by applicant H. (App. No. 19999-25), the applicant’s child was also diagnosed as “unfit for military service in both peacetime and wartime.”

Applicants İ. (3403-25), R. (10588-25), X. (18360-25) and H. (20206-25) complained to the Ombudsman,

stating that their children performing compulsory active military service were suffering from various illnesses and were not properly medically assessed at the time of conscription, and requested appropriate assistance. With the Ombudsman's interventions with the Ministry of Defense and the Command of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the applicants' children were re-examined, and all four military personnel were assessed as "unfit for military service in peacetime and fit with limitations in wartime."

(App. No. 16498-25): Applicant C. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that he had not been properly medically assessed at the time of conscription into compulsory active military service, that despite his serious health condition he had served for seven months, and that his condition had further deteriorated due to a lack of due medical attention by doctors at his place of service. He requested that appropriate measures be taken.

According to the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ganja Military Prosecutor's Office, based on the results of the preliminary examination, it was indicated that the applicant had been diagnosed with "congenital insufficiency of the aortic valve, bicuspid; Ao-3.9." Although he had been returned to military unit "N" for certification and was to be referred, with the relevant documentation, to a military medical commission to determine his fitness category, this was not ensured due to the failure of the person acting in place of the head of the medical service of the military unit to perform his duties. As a result, the applicant's condition worsened.

Subsequently, the applicant was examined by the military medical commission of the Central Military Polyclinic of the Ministry of Defense and was diagnosed with "congenital insufficiency of the aortic valve; bicuspid aortic valve; second-degree aortic insufficiency" (Q23.1), "microcytosis without functional impairment" (D58.0), and "retention cyst of the right sphenoid sinus" (Y34.1), classified as a general disease. Pursuant to Article 72 "c", Column II, of the Schedule of Diseases approved by Decision No. 59 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 29.02.2008, he was assessed as "unfit for active military service in peacetime and fit with limitations in wartime."

It was also noted in the response that, depending on the outcome of the investigation conducted in relation to the person who had committed official negligence in this matter, a decision would be taken in accordance with the law.

Based on the results of the examination conducted in relation to a similar complaint submitted by applicant A. (19079-25), and the response provided by the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription, it was established that the applicant's child was conscripted into compulsory active military service as fit for service; however, after 3 months and 18 days, he was re-examined and assessed as "unfit for active military service in peacetime and fit with limitations in wartime," and was discharged into the reserve before completing his military service.

In this regard, the Ombudsman considers that, in order to ensure more effective protection of the rights of conscripts, as well as to enhance efficiency in staffing the Armed Forces with individuals fit for service, more qualified specialists should be engaged in the Conscription and Military Medical Commissions operating within the local bodies of the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription, and that oversight and accountability measures in this area should be strengthened.

Some individuals reported difficulties in obtaining their military ID cards or having the relevant entries made therein, as well as undue delays in the examination of their applications, resulting in obstacles to the exercise of other rights. As a consequence of the measures taken in relation to these complaints, appropriate actions were ensured in accordance with the law to restore the violated rights.

(App.No.5492-25), N. (12080-25) and B. (18782-25): the applicants complained to the Ombudsman, stating that their applications to the relevant authorities for the issuance of military ID cards had remained without result, and requested assistance.

With the Ombudsman's interventions with the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription and the Ministry of Defense, the applicants were provided with military ID certificates.

(App. No.17132-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that his application submitted to the Ganja City Kapaz District Department of the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription, requesting the entry of relevant information into his personal file on the basis of a certificate issued by the Ministry of Defense, had remained without results.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Service for Mobilization and Conscription, it was indicated that, although the applicant's request to send an inquiry to the relevant military unit for the purpose of recording information regarding his service in military unit "N" of the Ministry of Defense in the rank of warrant officer in his military ID card and personal file had been received by the Kapaz District Department of Ganja City, it had not been registered and had been lost under unknown circumstances.

It was further noted that, during the internal service inspection, the applicant's application of the same content was re-accepted and forwarded to the relevant authority, and that the staff member of the Kapaz District Department responsible for the shortcomings was subjected to disciplinary liability.

Furthermore, with the Ombudsman's intervention with the Ministry of Defense regarding a similar complaint of the same nature submitted by applicant Q. (1968-25), the necessary entries were made in the military ID card of the applicant's child.

The incoming applications to the Ombudsman were also complaints regarding difficulties in exercising the right to leave specified by legislation.

Applicant M. (13117-25) and applicant S. (5738-25) complained to the Ombudsman, stating that they were granted annual leave and leave on family grounds, respectively, and that their applications submitted to the relevant authorities had remained without results. With the Ombudsman's interventions with the Ministry of Defense, the right to leave of both applicants was ensured.

Analysis of the appeals and the results of meetings with military personnel indicate that certain problems persist in the provision of housing for military personnel performing active military service, as well as for those discharged into the reserve or retirement. Among these individuals, a significant proportion consisted of military personnel currently serving or having served in the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Border Service. In these appeals, military personnel requested that the provisions of the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 569 dated 28 December 2011 "On measures to strengthen the social protection of military personnel of the Azerbaijan Army" also be applied to them.

Within the framework of the Ombudsman's legal educational activities, awareness-raising activities were organized during the reporting year in military units, specialized educational and medical institutions in accordance with the approved action plan.

During these events, meetings were held with personnel, and their living conditions were assessed. Questions of military servicemen were answered, and necessary recommendations were given to commanders of some military units and heads of facilities to address the existing problems. Furthermore, along with living conditions of the military personnel, the assessment of food and material provision, the quality of meals, the organization of medical services, the use of leisure time, and the conditions to ensure compliance with sanitary and hygiene standards, as well as training and educational activities with personnel, were conducted. Recommendations were made to the command of the military units and the administration of the institutions to further improve the protection of the rights of military servicemen.

During meetings with military personnel, they also raised requests for assistance in obtaining 'war veteran' status for individuals who participated in combat operations carried out in defense of the territorial integrity of the Republic during the period between the First and Second Karabakh Wars, including the April 2016 hostilities, the July 2020 Tovuz combat operations, and the anti-terror operations conducted in 2023.

In this regard, it is recommended to establish the status of these individuals in legislation.

The Protection of Women's Rights. As one of the fundamental values of a modern democratic and legal state, the protection of women's rights is contingent upon the realization of the principles of universality and equality in ensuring human rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the protection of women's rights and freedoms is considered a vital indicator of the preservation of human dignity, as well as of efforts to prevent discrimination and strengthen gender equality, and to ensure social justice.

The international treaties binding on the state, along with national legislation, create a legal foundation for the full and effective protection of women's rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, efforts continue to increase the role of women in all spheres of socio-political life and to ensure their rights and freedoms more effectively.

The Ombudsman carries out extensive activities aimed at more effective protection of women's rights, expanding their economic opportunities, and ensuring their more active participation in all areas, especially in decision-making processes. Regular meetings have been held with women to reduce unemployment and poverty among them, as well as to support the development of women's entrepreneurship. Necessary steps have been taken to address existing difficulties, and proposals have been submitted to relevant institutions regarding the improvement of support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs.

The received complaints of violations of women's rights in labor, social security, and the right to health, as well as issues such as domestic violence, early marriage, and gender-based discrimination, have been investigated in accordance with the law, and appropriate measures have been taken. In many cases, the rights have been restored.

(App.No.13473-25): Applicant M. complained to the Ombudsman that while working at the Balakan Youth House Social Service Institution, her labor rights had been grossly violated by the institution's management. She had been dismissed from her job when she was on maternity leave, and her other rights were also violated. She requested investigating her case and taking measures in accordance with the law.

Following the Ombudsman's appeal to the Ministry of Youth and Sports regarding the complaint, the order terminating the employment contract was revoked, and the applicant was reinstated in her position.

(App.No.16890-25): Applicant B. appealed to the Ombudsman, stating that she had been subjected to domestic violence by her spouse and had also received death threats. Her previous appeals to the relevant authorities to obtain a protection order had remained unsuccessful and she asked for help.

Following the Ombudsman's appeal to the Sumgait City Executive Authority regarding the complaint, the case was investigated, and a decision was made to issue the applicant a short-term protection order to prevent further domestic violence by her spouse. The decision was sent to the relevant authorities for implementation.

(App.No.1586/2-25): Applicant Z. complained to the Ombudsman that a woman she represents under a power of attorney had been subjected to domestic violence and threats by her spouse. She requested assistance in ensuring that the woman is provided with a protection order.

Following the Ombudsman's appeal to the Surakhani District Executive Authority regarding the complaint, the matter was investigated, and the issuance of a short-term protection order to the citizen was ensured.

(App.No.16679-25): Applicant C. complained to the Ombudsman that she had been working at "Baku Metro" CJSC since 2022 but was laid off on August 11, 2025, due to staff reduction. She noted that one of her children has a second-degree visual disability and that, as a low-income family, they are currently living in financial hardship with her three children. She requested assistance in being reinstated to her job or provided with alternative employment.

Following the Ombudsman's appeal to "Baku Metro" Closed Joint-Stock Company regarding the

complaint, the applicant was employed in the Advertising Department of the company's Commercial Department.

The protection of the rights of women prisoners has also been kept in focus.

Within the framework of the Ombudsman's NPM and the Independent Monitoring Mechanism, during a visit to the Baku Pretrial Detention Center of the Penitentiary Service of the Ministry of Justice, women with disabilities held in the institution were received in their cells, as well as confidentially upon their request. Issues related to the protection of their rights and the condition of the services provided were examined, their appeals addressed to the Ombudsman were accepted, and recommendations were given to the institution's administration to address the shortcomings.

The Ombudsman's representatives held meetings with five women, nationals of the Republic of Azerbaijan, who had been living in difficult conditions in the Syrian Arab Republic, were repatriated to the country, and were placed in a social service institution. Their rights protection was reviewed, and relevant discussions were held with the institution's management and staff.

Through the Ombudsman's Working Group on "Mental Health and Human Rights", a monitoring visit was conducted to the "Women's Rehab" center, where women suffering from drug addiction, alcoholism, gambling addiction, and other dependencies are rehabilitated. Women in rehabilitation in this establishment were received voluntarily and confidentially; their living conditions, treatment, and the protection of their rights were examined, and the center's dining, administrative, sports, walking, and recreation areas were inspected. The Ombudsman's legal awareness publications were presented to the center's management, and recommendations were made for improving its activities.

In addition, Ombudsman representatives participated in meetings of the monitoring and coordination group established under Cabinet of Ministers Decision No. 367 (July 30, 2024). They provided recommendations on protecting women's rights, preventing gender-based violence, improving legal and institutional frameworks, and advancing public awareness and monitoring initiatives.

As part of legislative reform efforts, the Ombudsman's recommendations were integrated into the National Action Plans on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2025-2030) and the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2026-2028), as well as into the drafts of the Work Plan for the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence,' prepared by the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In addition, the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (Equality between Men and Women) for 2026-2028 was officially approved by Presidential Decree on December 29, 2025.

Based on the analysis of applications and the results of investigations, it should be noted that the occurrence of cases of women's rights violations often stems from women not being sufficiently aware of their own rights. For this reason, throughout the year, the Ombudsman Office and its regional centers have conducted numerous educational events dedicated to local and international commemorative days in order to increase public awareness on women's rights and freedoms, including domestic violence and gender equality, as well as developing women's legal literacy.

It should be specifically noted that, during the "Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty," a series of events were organized on topics such as "Gender equality: our rights and duties," "The family - A Core Pillar of Society and The State, and the bearer of national-moral values," and "Protection of the rights of vulnerable groups of migrants." Furthermore, during the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" (November 25 - December 10), as well as during the "Human Rights" and "Child Rights" month-long campaigns, numerous trainings and seminars on the protection of the women's and girls' rights were held, and relevant printed materials and articles were prepared.

The Ombudsman has continued the teaching of the "Introduction to Gender" course at Baku State University, and lectures have been delivered on topics such as women's rights, gender equality, domestic violence, and related issues.

Staff of the Ombudsman Office and its regional centers have participated in national and international events, including trainings and seminars, and have engaged in the exchange of experience. The events, including public hearings held at the Parliamentary Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs on the topic "Family, women and children's rights as a primary priority of constitutional rights" during the "Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty"; trainings held at the Azerbaijan Academy of Labor and Social Relations, a higher education institution of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation; the conference on "Pathways to achieving social justice and gender equality in Azerbaijan: Achievements and future perspectives," jointly organized by the MLSPP and the International Labor Organization (ILO); and the event titled "The woman's voice in the light of April," organized by the Public Union of the Women's Health Center, were valuable contributions for increasing efficiency in ensuring human rights and freedoms, including women's rights, and for strengthening multilateral cooperation in this direction.

Cooperation with international and regional organizations in the field of women's rights protection has been continued. Representatives of the Ombudsman Office and regional centers participated in many projects implemented via this cooperation. During foreign visits, information was provided on the Ombudsman's activities in the protection of women's rights, and best practices were shared. For example, during a thematic session "Human Rights of Women and Girls, Promoting Gender Equality: The Role of NHRIs," of the Annual Meeting of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) held in Geneva, views were exchanged on existing problems, best practices, and ways of solution. During this session, the participants were informed about comprehensive information regarding the activities of the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan in protecting women's rights.

In addition, staff of the Ombudsman Office have participated in annual meetings, trainings, and "HELP" courses conducted within the framework of the joint "Partnership for Good Governance" program, specifically under the project titled "Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan," and were certified accordingly.

It should be noted that a representative of the Ombudsman serves as a focal point in the Subcommittee on Women's Rights. This subcommittee was established under the Ombudsman Association of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OICOA) to serve as a specialized platform for strengthening institutional cooperation for the protection and promotion of women's rights, sharing best practices, and advancing concrete measures.

Protection of the Rights of Children. Children represent the most valuable asset, embodying our future. Ensuring, protecting, and promoting the rights of the child is of fundamental importance for their health, development, well-being, and the realization of a safe and prosperous future.

Ensuring and protecting the rights of the child constitutes one of the priority areas of the Ombudsman's activities. The relevant complaints and applications submitted to the Ombudsman were examined; inquiries received from relevant institutions and international organizations were duly responded to; analytical assessments were carried out, and opinions and recommendations were formulated; and awareness-raising activities were implemented.

Applications received by the Ombudsman regarding child rights mainly were about the failures to pay child support (alimony). The non-enforcement of court decisions on maintenance obligations creates significant difficulties in ensuring the child's well-being and also restricts the effective realization of their other rights.

In this regard, in order to address the difficulties in payment of child-support established by court decisions, the Ombudsman officially submitted the relevant inquiries to the Ministry of Justice. Consequently, in a number of cases, outstanding debts were recovered, and the regular payment of monthly maintenance was reinstated.

(App.No. 6889-25): The applicant, H., addressed the Ombudsman alleging that the Tartar District Enforcement and Probation Department had failed to take the necessary enforcement measures to execute a relevant court decision in a civil case to which the applicant was a party, concerning a maintenance (alimony) claim.

Following an inquiry addressed by the Ombudsman to the Ministry of Justice, the matter was examined. In the course of the enforcement proceedings, it was established that the debtor was in receipt of a pension, and enforcement of the claim was accordingly directed to that source of income.

Taking into account the importance of alimony for the upbringing and well-being of children, the particular emphasis placed by legislation on the fulfillment of this obligation, as well as the challenges in the enforcement of court decisions, and relevant international best practices, the Ombudsman's previous proposals put forward in annual reports, including the establishment of an Alimony Fund and the introduction of mandatory measures to promote the employment of debtor persons, remain relevant.

The analysis of complaints concerning the enforcement of court decisions on child contact and guardianship indicates that parties do not always act in the best interests of the child during enforcement proceedings, adversely affecting the child's psychological well-being and hindering effective execution. The proposal previously advanced by the Ombudsman in earlier annual reports concerning the improvement of enforcement mechanisms in this field, as well as the introduction of relevant legislative amendments to ensure the involvement of a psychologist in the enforcement process, remains relevant.

(App.No. 3907-25): Applicant, D, addressed the Ombudsman stating that, pursuant to a relevant court decision, the children born of the marriage were placed in her (mother) care; however, they had been taken from their educational institution by their father, and she had been unable to obtain information about their whereabouts.

The applicant further indicated that, despite contacting the "102" Service - Call Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which had been forwarded to the Sumgayit City Police Department, no action had been taken.

Following an Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the issue was examined and the necessary measures were taken. Consequently, during a reception held by the management of the Sumgayit City Police Department, the children were returned to the applicant by their father.

(App.No. 892-25): The applicant, D, alleged that the necessary steps were not taken to enforce a court decision in a civil case concerning guardianship to which he was a party. Following an Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Justice, the matter was examined. According to the response, the Ganja Court of Appeal issued a writ of execution ordering that the applicant's three minor children be taken from their father and placed in the applicant's care. During the enforcement proceedings, the Barda District Enforcement and Probation Department and the Binagadi District Enforcement Department carried out enforcement actions; however, the debtor failed to comply voluntarily. As a result of compulsory enforcement measures, the authorities took two of the applicant's children from the debtor and returned them to the applicant.

As the debtor refused to hand over the applicant's other child and failed to comply with the lawful instructions of the enforcement officer, the Barda District Court ordered the debtor's administrative detention for a period of 15 days.

The response further states that the competent authority continues to take enforcement measures to ensure execution of the court decision, taking into account the child's legally protected interests.

According to paragraph 12.1 of Resolution No. 6/2011 of 28 October 2011 of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, entitled "On the application by courts of legislation concerning the right of parents and other relatives to contact with a child", the operative part of a judgment on contact must specify where, when and for what duration the child is to be handed over, in order to ensure the effective exercise of the child's right to contact and the parties' reciprocal obligations, including the child's return.

Furthermore, pursuant to paragraph 7.6 of Resolution No. 8-2/2016 of 28 March 2016 of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, entitled "On the application by courts of legislation in cases

concerning the dissolution of marriage, determination of the parent with whom minor children reside after divorce, and claims for the recovery of maintenance (alimony) for children”, in resolving the issue of determining with which parent the child shall reside in the operative part of a court judgment, in cases where the child is not currently residing with that parent, the court is required not only to decide on the transfer of the child from the other parent to the parent designated for residence, but also to take into account the nature of the relationship between the child and that parent.

Where the court establishes that, due to the absence of contact between the child and the designated parent over an extended period, the emotional bond has weakened and the relationship has deteriorated to a degree that may complicate the enforcement of the judgment in the future, it is noted that, in the best interests of the child, the court should specify in the operative part of the judgment the procedure and time frame for enforcement, in accordance with Article 220.6 of the Civil Procedure Code.

Based on the analysis of applications, it is observed that in a number of cases, although courts have determined with which parent the child shall reside, the non-custodial (debtor) parent, under the pretext of contact and in the absence of a separate court order governing visitation, takes the child and fails to return them.

In such situations, the enforcement service, referring to the fact that the court judgment only determines custody and does not contain an explicit provision for the compulsory removal of the child from the debtor and transfer to the custodial parent, recommends that the claimant file a new claim before the court with the relevant request.

This practice creates serious difficulties, as it may result in negative psychological effects on the child during this period and may even lead, over time, to the child’s refusal to return to the custodial parent.

In view of the foregoing, courts adjudicating such cases should give due consideration to the interpretative guidance on judicial practice contained in the relevant decisions of the Plenum of the Supreme Court, as this is essential for ensuring the effective enforcement of judgments.

An analysis of applications indicates that there are functional shortcomings in the activities of the relevant authorities with regard to ensuring that the best interests of the child are given primary consideration when ascertaining the views of children in dispute resolution, as well as when conducting assessments concerning children. In this regard, it is of particular importance to enhance the effectiveness of the guardianship and trusteeship authorities, as well as the commissions on the protection of children’s rights.

(App.No. 4673-25): Applicant complained to the Ombudsman that, in the course of a civil case pending before the Tartar District Court, to which they are a party, staff members of the Guardianship and Trusteeship Commission under the Sabunchu District Executive Authority exerted psychological pressure on their children while preparing an opinion for the court. The applicant further alleged that the children were interviewed in the absence of a psychologist.

In response to the Ombudsman’s inquiry, the Sabunchu District Executive Authority stated that the commission had inspected the respondent’s living conditions and prepared a corresponding report. It further indicated that the commission’s responsible secretary had conducted separate interviews with the applicant’s children and ascertained their views on the matter.

In this regard, it should be noted that Article 3 of the Regulation “On Commissions for the Protection of Children’s Rights”, approved by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 336-IIQ dated 31 May 2002, stipulates that, in order to carry out the current activities of the commissions and oversee the implementation of their decisions, local commissions shall include, in addition to a responsible secretary, positions of a consultant-psychologist for work with children and families. These positions are considered in the staffing schedule and are paid positions.

However, as evidenced by the above-mentioned case (No. 4673-25), the responsible secretary of the commission conducted separate interviews with the applicant’s children and assessed their views without

the participation of a psychologist, which gave rise to the applicant's justified dissatisfaction.

In addition to the above, improving the professionalism of individuals working with children is essential for ensuring effective assessments and for safeguarding the best interests of children, particularly among psychologists within local executive authorities. In order to increase the effectiveness of work in this area, the Ombudsman's proposals put forward in previous annual reports regarding the provision of district (city) commissions on the protection of children's rights, with the necessary human resources, remain relevant.

Based on the analysis of appeals and investigations, it is considered appropriate to introduce amendments to Articles 192.3 and 197.1 of the Civil Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan to ensure the participation of a psychologist when ascertaining the views of children whose interests are affected in disputes concerning their rights, as well as during the questioning of minor witnesses.

The applications received by the Ombudsman also include complaints related to incidents of violence within families, as well as in general and preschool educational institutions. Allegations concerning acts of violence committed by teachers and students, as well as by preschool educators, were investigated on the basis of inquiries addressed to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, and appropriate measures were subsequently taken in accordance with the law.

(App.No. 8717-25): Applicant, A., applied to the Ombudsman alleging that his/her grandchild, a student at one of the full secondary schools in Siyazan, was subjected to insulting behavior by their Azerbaijani language and literature teacher. The applicant further stated that prior appeals to the relevant authorities had remained ineffective and requested that appropriate measures be taken.

In connection with the complaint, an inquiry was initiated based on the Ombudsman's request addressed to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education. As a result of the investigation, an explanation was obtained from the teacher concerned. In accordance with the relevant order of the school principal, the teacher was issued a written warning pursuant to Article 186, paragraph 3 of the Labor Code of the Republic for violating the "Rules of Ethical Conduct for Educators." Additionally, necessary instructions were provided to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents.

(App.No. 8961-25): The applicant, B., applied to the Ombudsman alleging that his child, who is enrolled in an inclusive class at one of the full secondary schools in Shirvan, was subjected to physical violence by the class teacher. The applicant requested that the matter be investigated and that appropriate legal measures be taken.

In connection with the complaint, the issue was examined on the basis of an inquiry addressed by the Ombudsman to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education. According to the response received, the employment contract of the teacher concerned was terminated in accordance with subparagraph "a" of part 2 of Article 68 of the Labor Code.

(App.No. 846-25): Applicant, D., applied to the Ombudsman alleging that their child, enrolled in a nursery-kindergarten institution in the city of Bilasuvar, had repeatedly been subjected to cruel treatment by a kindergarten teacher and faced a biased attitude. The applicant stated that, as a result, the child had experienced serious emotional and psychological distress, and requested that the matter be investigated and appropriate legal measures be taken.

In connection with the complaint, an inquiry was addressed by the Ombudsman to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education. Based on this request, a relevant investigation was conducted by the Shirvan-Salyan Regional Education Department. According to the response provided, the allegations indicated in the complaint were not substantiated.

It should be noted that, during the examination of complaints concerning incidents of violence in educational institutions, the absence of video surveillance systems or their malfunctioning significantly hinders the possibility of conducting a thorough and comprehensive assessment of alleged incidents and fully clarifying the circumstances of the case. In this regard, it is recommended to install CCTV in all child-care institutions to prevent potential incidents of violence and other negative occurrences, to ensure objective investigations, and to safeguard the safety and security of children.

In addition to the above, it is essential to enhance awareness among educators and other staff of educational institutions of their responsibilities, children's rights, and appropriate standards of conduct when working with children, as well as to improve support for children subjected to violence and strengthen mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence.

For the purpose of investigating certain incoming complaints about violence against children, including domestic violence, inquiries were addressed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and local executive authorities, and necessary measures were taken accordingly.

(App.No. 16279-25): Applicant, T., lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman alleging that his child, born in 2019 and with a disability, had been subjected to acts of a sexual nature and claimed that the Binagadi District Police Department investigated the case in a non-objective manner.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the Binagadi District Prosecutor's Office regarding this complaint, upon which the case was investigated.

According to the response received, as a result of the measures taken, three individuals were being charged as accused persons under Article 150.3.3 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan. By decisions of the Binagadi District Court, a preventive measure in the form of pre-trial detention for a period of three months was imposed on two of the accused, while in respect of the third individual, pre-trial detention was not ordered, and instead, an alternative preventive measure of supervision was imposed.

Furthermore, expert examinations were ordered and relevant conclusions obtained; footage from surveillance cameras was collected and added to the case materials; and the necessary investigative actions were carried out.

(App.No. 1101-25): The applicant, C., lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, stating that the relevant authorities had failed to examine his complaint regarding physical violence committed against his child by his former spouse.

The Ombudsman sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the competent authorities investigated the issue. According to the response received, the Investigation Department of the Khazar District Police Office of Baku City conducted the preliminary investigation into the criminal case. Within the framework of the proceedings, the applicant's former spouse was charged as an accused person under Articles 128, 133.2.4, and 133.2.6 of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan, and the court ordered a preventive measure in the form of pre-trial detention.

Following the completion of the preliminary investigation, the authorities referred the criminal case, together with the bill of indictment, to the Khazar District Court for consideration.

It is recommended that law enforcement bodies and local executive authorities strengthen preventive measures and further develop procedures for the issuance of protection orders, with a view to addressing existing challenges in the prevention of domestic violence.

It is also recommended that, in light of the negative impact of domestic violence on children's psychological well-being and academic outcomes, relevant authorities strengthen collaboration between school psychologists, teachers, and parents in the delivery of psychological support services, and take measures to align the number of psychologist positions in educational institutions with student population needs.

Incoming complaints regarding the realization of children's right to education highlighted a number of issues, including difficulties in admission to preschool education institutions; dissatisfaction with the results of the interview stage for admission to the first grade of Russian-language streams; admission to lyceums and gymnasiums; challenges related to student transfers; failure to issue graduation certificates; access to individualized and special education; the lack of subject teachers in certain disciplines in regional schools; the absence of full secondary schools in some rural areas; shortcomings in heating provision in preschool and general education institutions; dissatisfaction with teachers' pedagogical performance; and other related matters.

(App.No. 17489-25): Applicant, Sh., lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, stating that the relevant authorities had refused his request to enroll his child in home-based education, and requested appropriate assistance.

The Ombudsman submitted an inquiry to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, upon which the competent authorities conducted an investigation. Consequently, the applicant's child was enrolled in home-based education pursuant to a decision of the Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Commission operating under the Central Aran Regional Education Department (Yevlakh district).

(App.No. 16692-25): Applicant, Z., lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, expressing dissatisfaction with the results of the examination conducted for admission to the first grade of the Russian-language stream in general education institutions attended by his child.

With the Ombudsman's intervention, including an inquiry submitted to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, the issue was resolved.

(App.No. 17594-25): Applicant, K., lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, stating that his applications to the relevant authorities for the placement of his children in a preschool institution had remained without result.

The Ombudsman submitted an inquiry to the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education regarding this case. According to the response received, one of the applicant's children was admitted to Nursery-Kindergarten No. 1 in the Kerkijahan settlement of Khankendi city.

The other child, however, was not admitted due to the absence of an appropriate age group in the aforementioned institution and the lack of available places in the corresponding group at Nursery-Kindergarten No. 1 in the city of Khankendi.

During a monitoring visit conducted by representatives of the Ombudsman to Khankendi City Nursery-Kindergarten No. 1 under the Karabakh Regional Education Department of the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, it was found that there was a lack of available places in the institution and that relevant age-group placements would be organized at Nursery-Kindergarten No. 1 in the Kerkijahan settlement of the city of Khankendi.

Information obtained from complaints addressed to the Ombudsman indicates that parents, in a number of cases, experience challenges in enrolling their children in local preschool education institutions. According to the responses of the relevant authorities, admission to these institutions is usually determined by waiting list procedures and the availability of capacity. In this regard, taking into account the existing demand, it is essential to expand the network of state-funded preschool education institutions.

Incoming complaints regarding a child's right to health were mainly about the provision of state-funded medical examinations and treatment; unjustified removal from outpatient (polyclinic) services; dissatisfaction with the quality of medical care; inaccurate recording of medical history data in personal electronic health records; and other related issues.

(App.No. 10548-25): Applicant, S., lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, stating that although his children had not undergone any medical examinations at Ganja City Unified Hospital, incorrect diagnoses had been recorded in their personal electronic health records. The applicant requested that the matter be investigated and that assistance be provided in safeguarding his children's rights.

The Ombudsman submitted an inquiry to TABİB, and with her intervention, the relevant authority instructed its subordinate entity, "Digital Medical Solutions" LLC, to take appropriate measures, and the necessary corrections were made to the erroneously recorded information in the hospital management system.

The Ombudsman consistently prioritizes the protection of the rights of children living in difficult circumstances, as well as repatriated children. During 2025, meetings were held with 13 children, citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan, who were repatriated from the Syrian Arab Republic and placed in a social service institution under the MLSPP Social Services Agency. The situation with the protection of their rights was assessed. The Ombudsman's representatives held discussions with the management and staff of the institution, obtained information on the measures taken in relation to the residents, and provided recommendations concerning their social reintegration, access to education, documentation, and other related matters.

During the reporting period, awareness-raising activities about the protection of children's rights were continued. During the "Human Rights Month," initiated by the Ombudsman, a social awareness video was produced on the occasion of 1 June - International Children's Day, to increase public awareness of children's rights and freedoms and promote their meaningful and active participation in society. The video, prepared in partnership with Azerbaijan Gymnastics Federation, Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan, Neftchi Professional Football Club, European Azerbaijan School, and Joint and Healthy (Birgə və Sağlam) Public Union, highlights key principles such as the prohibition of discrimination against children, the primacy of the best interests of the child, the right of children to live and develop in a safe, healthy, and caring environment, and the importance of respecting children's views, as well as the need for joint action in this regard.

The video also features a call by the Ombudsman for the protection of children's rights, with the participation of children from diverse backgrounds.

On the occasion of 1 June - International Children's Day, an excursion to the Baku Zoological Park was organized for a group of students from Boarding-Type Special General Education School No. 2 in Baku, in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Education of and "Silent Communication" Sign language development Public Union. The event supported the meaningful use of children's leisure time, supported their integration into society, and promoted inclusivity.

The Ombudsman's article "Children's Constitutional Rights Are in the Spotlight" written on the occasion of International Children's Day, was published in the "Respublika" newspaper, and the article "The Ombudsman's Role in the Effective Protection of Children's Rights", dedicated to 20 November, World Children's Day, was published in the "Azerbaijan" newspaper.

During the "Human Rights Month", an awareness-raising event dedicated to 12 June - World Day Against Child Labor was also organized at Technical-Humanitarian Lyceum No. 16 in Baku.

Traditionally, in 2025, the Ombudsman once again declared the period from 20 October to 20 November as the "Child Rights Month" in the country, on the eve of the anniversary of the adoption of the CRC. The purpose of the initiative was to increase public awareness on the protection of child rights, to mobilize relevant institutions and draw public attention to child protection issues, and to enhance civic engagement in this area.

Within the framework of the Month-long campaign, the Ombudsman addressed appeals to 103 institutions, including central and local executive authorities, public legal entities, and non-commercial organizations,

with a view to organizing awareness-raising activities. In total, more than 3,000 awareness-raising events were conducted.

Also, the Ombudsman issued a public appeal, calling on all state and local self-government bodies, CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders working in the field of children's rights to contribute to ensuring the more effective protection of children's rights within the framework of the Month.

During the Month, the Ombudsman Office and its regional centers held a series of awareness-raising activities on children's rights.

The Ombudsman visited Boarding-Type Special General Education School No. 5 in Baku, observed student performances dedicated to 8 November - Victory Day, and conducted awareness-raising meetings with the institution's staff and students.

During the month-long campaign, the Ombudsman Office conducted awareness-raising activities in educational institutions in the liberated territories, including Khankendi, Khojaly, and Aghdam.

These activities were held at Secondary School No. 4, named after Nizami Ganjavi, in Khankendi, Ballija Village Secondary School in Khojaly district, Secondary School No. 1 in Khojaly, Khydyrly Village Secondary School, named after Aykol Manas, in Aghdam district, and Kangarli Village Secondary School in Aghdam district. The events were organized for students and teaching staff, while a separate activity at Nursery-Kindergarten No. 1 in Khankendi involved the institution's staff.

Overall, more than 450 students and over 60 members of teaching staff benefited from these activities, and publications of the Office were distributed to the participants.

As part of the series of activities, the Ombudsman Office organized an awareness-raising meeting for children at Integrated Education Boarding-Type General Education School No. 11 in Baku. During the meeting, children were provided with comprehensive information on their rights and responsibilities, as well as the CRC provisions, the nature of rights violations and their legal consequences.

They were also informed about the Ombudsman's mandate and activities in the field of the protection of child rights, and legal awareness publications were distributed to the institution.

The Penitentiary Institution for Juveniles under the Penitentiary Service of the Ministry of Justice held an awareness-raising meeting with the participation of Ombudsman's National Preventive Group members. During the meeting, juveniles were informed of their rights and responsibilities.

During the month-long campaign, Neftchi Professional Football Club, in cooperation with the Ombudsman Office and Umut Yeri Child Shelter, contributed to the promotion of children's rights. During the Neftchi PFC-Kapaz match held on 1 November 2025, the players took to the field wearing specially designed jerseys featuring hand-painted numbers and children's artwork.

During the game, Neftchi Professional Football Club and children jointly displayed a banner bearing the slogan "Let us unite for every child's happy future!", drawing public attention to the importance of protecting children's rights and issuing a call for solidarity.

The Ombudsman Office and MLSPP held joint awareness-raising activities at Child Care Social Service Institution No. 1 under the Social Services Agency of the Ministry. The activities were conducted in partnership with the Public Health and Reforms Center of the Ministry of Health and the Yasamal District Executive Authority. Also, awareness-raising training for young people was organized by the Binagadi Youth House Social Service Institution operating under the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan.

Overall, throughout the year, the institution conducted activities on the protection of children's rights in Baku, Khankendi, Khojaly, Aghdam, Ganja, Gadabay, Tovuz, Mingachevir, Sheki, Gakh, Balakan, Guba, Gusar, Khachmaz, Khizi, Siyazan, Naftalan, Salyan, Bilasuvar, Jalilabad, Masalli, Yardimli, Lankaran, Lerik, and

Astara. During these activities, participants were informed on national legal acts and international legal instruments related to children's rights, as well as available legal remedies.

The Ombudsman continued to cooperate with international organizations and foreign national human rights and children's rights institutions on the protection of children's rights.

In 2025, at the 29th General Assembly of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) held in Bucharest, the Ombudsman institution of Azerbaijan was elevated from associate to full membership by a majority vote of the member institutions. The institution was found to meet the criteria set out in the Network's Statute, taking into account the Ombudsman's work in protecting children's rights, including its role as an independent monitoring mechanism for the implementation and promotion of the CRC, as well as relevant legislative amendments and institutional reforms.

With this status, the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan has obtained the right to be represented in the Network's governing bodies, to participate fully in its work and decision-making processes with voting rights, and to submit matters related to the Network's activities to the General Assembly.

Furthermore, this achievement creates a foundation for the broader promotion of the institution's work and national experience in the field of children's rights, as well as for the strengthening of international cooperation.

During "Child Rights Month", the Ombudsman met with Vasile Coroi, President of the ENOC. During the meeting, the Ombudsman provided information on the measures undertaken in the country and by the institution in the field of the protection of children's rights, put forward recommendations for enhancing cooperation within the framework of the Network, and engaged in an exchange of views.

In 2025, inquiries received from international organizations concerning the protection of children's rights were also responded to.

In connection with UN HRC Resolution No. 55/29 on children's rights, the institution responded to requests related to the preparation of a report on violations of children's rights in armed conflicts, as well as to the development of an additional Optional Protocol to the relevant Convention on early childhood education and the right to free primary and general education. Relevant information and proposals were subsequently submitted to the OHCHR.

In addition, the institution responded to OHCHR surveys concerning the input for the preparation of reports by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse—specifically on the sexual exploitation of children in street situations in the context of the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly, and on the protection of children from sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in the context of the 61st Session of the UN HRC.

The institution also responded to information requests related to the development of guidelines on "Child, Early and Forced Marriage". Relevant information and proposals were duly provided to the competent UN bodies.

Ombudsman's representatives participated in training-of-trainers sessions on "Protection of Children from Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse," organized within the framework of the project "Protecting Children from Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, including in the Digital Environment," implemented by the Council of Europe Office in Baku under the 2022-2025 Action Plan for Azerbaijan.

Protection of the rights of the Elderly. Ensuring the effective protection of the rights of the elderly, who belong to vulnerable groups of the population, constitutes one of the priority directions of the state's social policy. It aims to provide this category of individuals with decent living conditions, equal opportunities, and social protection guarantees, to expand their participation in public life and volunteer activities, and thereby to enable more effective use of human capital.

Measures have been continued by the Ombudsman to create favorable conditions for the participation of elderly people in social, economic, and cultural life, as well as to eliminate existing difficulties in ensuring their rights, taking into account their capabilities, needs, and interests.

Appeals addressed to the Ombudsman regarding the protection of the rights of the elderly have included issues such as assessment of health conditions, provision of home (mobile) social services, access to sanatorium and resort vouchers, placement in social service institutions, recalculation of pensions, household and utility problems, as well as the provision of financial and food assistance, and other related matters. These appeals have been investigated, and when violations of rights were identified, necessary measures have been taken to eliminate them.

(App. No. 8518-25): Applicant C. stated that his appeals to the Saatli District Central Hospital for the formalization of a relevant referral to assess the impairment of their elderly mother's bodily functions had remained unsuccessful.

Following the Ombudsman's request to the Public Legal Entity for Management of Medical Territorial Units, the formalization of the referral was ensured.

(App. No. 17790-25): Elderly applicant V., who has 18 children, reported that there was no gas supply in the remote village where they live, and that due to the lack of heating fuel during the winter months, they and their family—who are living in financial hardship—were in a difficult situation. They also noted that their appeal to the relevant authorities had yielded no results.

Following the Ombudsman's appeal to the Astara District Executive Authority, the applicant was provided with firewood fuel by the Lankaran Regional Forestry Center No. 1.

(App. No. 15974/2-25): In connection with the appeal addressed to the Ombudsman by convicted applicant A. requesting assistance in examining the moral-psychological condition and health status of their mother T., who is a resident of a social service institution for elderly persons under the Social Services Agency of the MLSPP, a visit to the institution was carried out by the Ombudsman's staff.

During the visit, the applicant's mother consented to being examined and treated by doctors and psychologists. She was admitted to the surgery department of the Sabunchu Medical Center to continue treatment as prescribed by a physician. In addition, she was referred for a psychological assessment and, due to depressive symptoms, was involved in ongoing psychotherapeutic interventions, particularly cognitive behavioral therapy as well as group therapy aimed at improving her psychological condition, developing social connections, and strengthening communication skills.

Based on the instructions of the Ombudsman, members of the NPG and Independent Monitoring Groups conducted unannounced monitoring visits to the social service institution for the elderly under the Social Services Agency of the MLSPP. During these visits, it was revealed that some of the deficiencies identified in previous monitoring and inspection visits still exist; moreover, new shortcomings were also identified.

Specifically, during the monitoring, it was found that there is a shortage of staff providing services to the elderly at the institution. According to the staffing schedule, 75 employees are supposed to be working; however, there are currently vacant positions. Due to this, complaints from the elderly indicated that the level of services provided is low because of an insufficient workforce.

In addition, although the institution's staffing schedule includes one psychologist and two therapist positions, the positions remain vacant. Because of this reason, shortcomings have been determined in the implementation of measures targeted at the social and psychological rehabilitation of the aged people, as well as medical examinations. After this was noted as a deficiency in the course of the visit, a psychologist and a therapist were hired at the institution. It was determined that even though the second building of the institution was completely unfit for habitation, 90 elderly people lived there, including 8 long-term bedridden patients in one room, which lacked alarm buttons, special equipment, and other technical problems.

This situation cannot be considered appropriate from a social, medical, or psychological perspective. Such placement, in addition to being contrary to the principles of infection control, puts limitations on the opportunities for professional care for these individuals and affects their psycho-emotional state negatively.

Therefore, the abovementioned situation should be eliminated, and conditions based on individual care, needs-oriented, and meeting safety standards should be established for the elderly who are in long-term bed rest. It should be emphasized that, despite the need for major repairs to the building, repair and restoration work have not yet commenced.

Although it was discovered during monitoring that the catering company has provided food three times a day since January 1, 2022, the inhabitants of the institution have expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of nutrition and supplies since January 1, 2025. As a result of the recommendations made in previous years regarding the elimination of deficiencies found in the weekly meal menu in the cafeteria, this time it was revealed that the weekly food menu was in a proper manner. The fact that each of the two elevators in the facility is out of order also creates additional difficulties for aged inhabitants. In the course of visits and monitoring, in individual and collective meetings with inhabitants, complaints from the elderly were listened to, discussions were held with the institution's administration regarding a number of revealed shortcomings, and suggestions and recommendations were made.

This must be pointed out that the initiatives and directions of cooperation have been identified between the "Baku City Gerontology Center" Public Legal Entity, which carries out activities on the dispensary examination of patients in the geriatric age group (60+ years), providing them with medical and advisory assistance, preventing premature aging and organizing sanitary and hygienic awareness-raising work, and the Ombudsman Office on conducting legal awareness-raising activities aimed at reliable protection and effective provision of the right to health protection of the elderly.

Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ensuring that PWDs enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as their social protection and full integration into society, is a fundamental obligation of both the state and society. In this regard, the protection of the rights and freedoms of PWDs through the implementation of legal guarantees established by national legislation and cooperation with state agencies, civil society institutions, and international organizations constitutes a priority area of the Ombudsman's activities.

Throughout the year, complaints received by the Ombudsman about the protection of the PWDs' rights covered various issues. The problems were the failures in assessment of disability status, the granting of disability benefits, assistance with medical examinations and treatment, and the issuance of referrals to medical facilities and rehabilitation centers. Furthermore, applications were about the provision of subsidized medications, assistive technologies, and other related matters.

Cases still persist where medical referrals issued by Doctor-Consultant Commissions are deemed "incomplete" due to the omission of essential clinical notes required to establish disability status, resulting in the denial of claims. To address these issues highlighted in complaints, relevant inquiries were issued to the appropriate authorities. In many cases, the citizens' infringed rights were successfully restored.

(App.No. 6821-25): Applicant E. filed a complaint with the Ombudsman regarding the baseless rejection of medical referrals for their child's disability assessment.

After the Ombudsman intervened with the MLSP, the child was evaluated by a medical-social expert commission despite the referral being incomplete, and based on an objective examination and medical records, a 65% impairment rating was assigned due to general illness, and disability status was established for five years.

As well, the Ministry clarified that because the new determination was made within six months of the prior expiration, the complainant would receive the full social allowance, including back pay for the elapsed period.

(App.No. 14387-25): Applicant, I., sought the Ombudsman's help requesting the reassessment of his child's disability percentage.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Medical-Social Expertise and Rehabilitation Agency, it was clarified that the initial delay was caused by incomplete documentation from the Lankaran District Central Hospital.

To resolve the matter, the Agency's expert commission performed a home-visit evaluation. Upon reviewing the medical files, video documentation, and clinical findings, the commission established a 100% impairment rating, granting the child indefinite (permanent) disability status for a general illness.

As evidenced by these cases, the incomplete preparation of referrals by medical institutions creates significant difficulties in the assessment process. This not only leads to delays in disability determinations but also forces citizens to undergo a repetitive application process, creating barriers to the swift and effective fulfillment of their rights. It is essential to ensure that the agencies involved in the disability assessment process act with coordination and mutual trust. Streamlining assessment procedures and eliminating the need for redundant examinations remains a critical priority.

The complaints also highlight instances of bureaucratic red tape regarding the assessment of citizens' health conditions through at-home examinations based on existing medical documentation.

(App.No. 7744-25): Applicant, M. complained to the Ombudsman that his previous requests to the Goychay District Central Hospital for a medical referral to assess his father's impairment rating had been unsuccessful. He requested assistance in arranging an at-home medical examination.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Administration of Regional Medical Entities (TABIB), a home-based assessment was organized. Consequently, the applicant's father was assigned a 90% impairment rating and was granted permanent (indefinite) first-degree disability status.

(App.No. 8865-25): Applicant, S. filed a complaint with the Ombudsman requesting assistance with the disability reassessment of his mother.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Administration of Regional Medical Entities (TABIB), it was clarified that the applicant's mother had been officially registered as bedridden. Her health status was evaluated as a 40% impairment of body functions, resulting in the designation of third-degree disability status.

The incoming applications filed by PWDs were also investigated. The application was mainly about the allocation of targeted state social assistance, the coordination of medical examinations and treatment in relevant facilities, and the provision of essential medications and assistive technical devices. In each case, the implementation of statutory measures was ensured.

(App.No. 8553-25): Applicant, Y., who has a third-degree disability, complained to the Ombudsman that his mother, a second-degree disability holder was suffering from Stage IV oncology. Noting the family's severe financial hardship, he requested assistance in organizing comprehensive treatment for his mother.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Ministry of Health, the Ministry investigated the case and issued a directive to the National Oncology Center to ensure the patient's examination and treatment at a specialized medical facility.

(App.No. 3822/3-25): Applicant, H., complained to the Ombudsman that he had been assigned a disability status due to an 81-100% impairment of body functions. The applicant, who suffers from diabetes also reported that his previous appeals to obtain state-funded medications had remained unresolved.

After the Ombudsman's inquiry to the Administration of Regional Medical Entities (TABIB), the applicant

was provided with the medications included in the official list of drugs and medical supplies. Furthermore, the leadership of the Masalli District Central Hospital was formally instructed to keep the applicant's ongoing treatment and medication supply under supervision.

(App.No. 14984-25): Applicant, M., a person with a second-degree disability, complained to the Ombudsman that his application for Targeted State Social Assistance (TSSA) had remained unresolved.

Following the Ombudsman's inquiry to the State Social Protection Fund under the MLSPP, an investigation was conducted. The Ministry's response confirmed that, based on the application entered into the "Targeted Assistance" (VEMTAS) subsystem of the Centralized Electronic Information System, a monthly social assistance payment of 284.72 AZN was granted to the family for a period of one year.

(App.No. 11231-25): Applicant, H., who has a first-degree disability, complained to the Ombudsman that he could not anymore use his motorized wheelchair provided by the relevant authority three years ago as it became technically unusable, hindering his daily activities, freedom of movement, and social integration. Therefore, he requested assistance in obtaining a new motorized wheelchair replacement.

As a result of the Ombudsman's inquiry to the MLSPP, the case was reviewed and although the standard operational lifespan for motorized wheelchairs is five years, a medical-technical commission inspected the device based on the applicant's request and subsequently provided him with a new motorized wheelchair as it was determined that the wheelchair was beyond repair.

The protection of the rights of CWDs remained a focal point of the Ombudsman's mandate and their complaints about failures in the implementation of their rights to healthcare, social security, education, and other rights were thoroughly investigated.

The complaints (e.g., **App. Nos. 10533/3-25, 12545/4-25, 17198-25**, etc.), addressed to the Ombudsman by parents and other legal representatives regarding the educational rights of CWDs, specifically those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), revealed concerns about the decisions of psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions to transition their children from home-based instruction to special education programs.

The responses provided by the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education regarding these complaints stated that the psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions based their decisions on the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Education of PWDs (Special Education)"; the "State Standards of Special Education for the Education of PWDs" (confirmed by Cabinet of Ministers' Decision No. 75, dated February 8, 2024); and the "List of Illnesses Entitling the Right to Home Education and the Rules for Organizing Home Education" (confirmed by Cabinet of Ministers' Decree No. 77, dated May 10, 2002); and therefore, such complaints could not be successfully resolved.

In light of the above, it is recommended that the diagnostic criteria for children with ASD, specifically those facing severe functional barriers and significant social or communication challenges be formally included in the list of eligible illnesses. Accordingly, it is advisable to amend the "List of Illnesses Entitling the Right to Home Education and the Rules for Organizing Home Education".

An analysis of the incoming complaints indicates that the scarcity of specialized and general-purpose state rehabilitation and development centers in the regions, combined with a shortage of qualified and professional staff, creates significant hurdles in organizing education and rehabilitation services for CWDs. To address these real-world needs, it is vital to increase the number of state rehabilitation-development centers, strengthen professional capacity building, and expand the use of modern assistive technologies. Furthermore, studying and implementing international best practices is essential to ensuring that CWDs have equitable and continuous access to high-quality education and rehabilitation services.

The results of the investigations suggest a critical need to train and increase the number of teachers specialized in sign language and Braille, as well as to train all educational staff, including psychologists.

Furthermore, since sign language is recognized as the primary means of communication for individuals with hearing and speech impairments, it is recommended to implement professional training programs for sign language interpreters and take measures for promoting the widespread use of sign language.

Within the framework of the 2025 Action Plan approved by the Ombudsman to enhance efficiency in the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms, a series of legal awareness-raising events for the representatives of public institutions, CSOs, and the media was organized.

As part of Autism Awareness Month, a representative of the Ombudsman delivered a speech at the "Blue Light Path" (Mavi İşıqlı Yol) conference, organized by the Azerbaijan Autism Association. During the event, the representative made recommendations for the protection of the rights of children with autism, focusing on their developmental dynamics and rehabilitation process.

As part of the "Human Rights Month" declared by the Ombudsman, a representative delivered a speech on the theme "Know Your Rights, Protect Your Rights" at the Vocational and Labor Rehabilitation Center for PWDs under the Social Services Agency of the MLSPP. Throughout the month, the Ombudsman's regional centers also organized a series of educational events focused on the protection of the PWDs' rights.

The Ombudsman Institution organized a roundtable discussion titled "Equal Opportunities for PWDs: Strengthening National Mechanisms" to promote effective dialogue between public institutions and civil society members in order to ensure the fulfillment of rights established by both international legal instruments and national laws. Discussions at the event were about the provision of reasonable accommodation, existing challenges, and potential solutions. The participants were informed about the Ombudsman's best practices in protecting the PWDs' rights, including its functions as an Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM). Also, representatives from the ombuds institutions of Türkiye, Montenegro, and Serbia presented their respective national experiences and expertise in this field.

With a continued focus on protecting the rights and freedoms of persons with visual impairments and ensuring their access to essential resources, on the occasion of January 4th - World Braille Day, a specialized educational tool was developed. The publication, titled "National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture," was produced in Braille specifically for individuals with total vision loss to enhance their legal awareness.

At the Ombudsman's initiative, an informative video was produced under the slogan "For an inclusive society where everyone has equal rights!" dedicated to December 3rd -International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The video serves to promote an inclusive society and emphasize the importance of the full and equal implementation of the rights of PWDs. It specifically highlights the removal of existing barriers and aims to increase public awareness regarding the Ombudsman's role as the IMM over the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Ombudsman continued to strengthen cooperation with international organizations in the field of protecting the rights of PWDs. In this regard, the Ombudsman Institution responded to an inquiry submitted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) regarding a thematic study on ensuring the accessibility of urban transport and the promotion of an independent lifestyle for PWDs.

Within the framework of international cooperation, Ombudsman's representatives regularly participated in meetings, seminars, and training sessions organized by the CRPD Working Group of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI). During these sessions, the representatives provided detailed information on the Azerbaijan Ombudsman's mandate for the protection, promotion, and monitoring of the rights of PWDs and participated in extensive discussions.

Ombudsman's representatives participated in the III Global Disability Summit held in Berlin, Germany, which brought together state officials, civil society representatives, and PWDs. They engaged in discussions on fostering inclusive environments, ensuring accessibility within education systems, improving infrastructural accessibility, and promoting the active participation of PWDs in public life and decision-making processes.

The Ombudsman's delegation participated in the 29th ENOC Annual Conference in Bucharest on the theme "Protecting and Promoting the Children's Right to Physical Health." They exchanged successful case studies and examined the impact of legislative amendments proposed by various ombuds institutions to strengthen the legal protections for children's health.

Within the framework of international cooperation and at the Ombudsman's initiative, an international webinar titled "Protecting the Rights of PWDs in the Context of Corporate Responsibility: The Role of Ombudsman Institutions" was held in collaboration with the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) to mark the December 3rd - International Day of Persons with Disabilities. During the session, the Ombudsman emphasized the importance of ensuring PWDs' rights and opportunities as equal members of society, adding that their protection is a top priority in her activities. The Ombudsman also provided insights into the institution's function as an IMM and underscored the significance of corporate responsibility in protecting the PWDs' rights and promoting inclusivity. Furthermore, the Ombudsman highlighted the necessity for business entities to integrate a human rights-based approach into their operational strategies and called for expanded cooperation in this field.

During the event, representatives of the Ombudsman Institution delivered presentations titled "The Growing Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Strengthening Corporate Responsibility: The Experience of Azerbaijan" and "Ensuring Equal Opportunities for PWDs: The Experience of the Azerbaijan Ombudsman," and shared best practices achieved.

Protection of the rights of detainees and prisoners. The protection and enjoyment of the rights of detainees and prisoners are governed by applicable international instruments binding on the state, as well as by national legislation. These frameworks require detention conditions in line with international standards and ensure access to healthcare, legal and social assistance, personal safety, and communication with family members, among other safeguards.

During the reporting period, complaints by detainees and prisoners, and by their family members and lawyers were dealt with delays in notifying families, non-payment for work, restrictions on phone calls and visits, unjustified limitations on receiving parcels and consignments, refusal to issue powers of attorney, negative opinions issued by the special commission of the Ministry of Justice on applications for conditional early release, delays in medical examination and treatment, difficulties in access to necessary medicines, and other related issues.

(App. No. 2581/2-25): Applicant T. contacted the Ombudsman's Call Centre, stating that she had been unable to obtain information about her child held at Penitentiary Institution No. 12 of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice and had not been granted a visit and requested assistance.

With the Ombudsman's intervention, the applicant was provided with a short-term visit and telephone contact with her child.

(App. No. 5401-25): Applicant K. contacted the Ombudsman's Call Centre, reporting restrictions on a parcel delivered to her spouse at Penitentiary Institution No. 16 under the Ministry of Justice, and requested assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention, her spouse's right to receive the parcel was ensured.

(App. No. 5708-25): Applicant M. contacted the Ombudsman's Call Centre, complaining about lack of access to information about her brother held at Pre-trial Detention Facility No. 3 under the Ministry of Justice, and requested assistance.

As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention, her brother was granted telephone contact and a short-term visit with family members.

Complaints received by the Ombudsman also reflected instances of failing to pay wages to certain inmates who had performed labor in penitentiary institutions were not paid wages, as well as failing to issue the

relevant powers of attorney. In response to such complaints, appropriate inquiries were conducted and the necessary measures were taken to remedy the identified violations.

(App. No. 6528-25): Applicant Z. applied to the Ombudsman, stating that his grandchild was suffering from severe illness and requesting assistance in providing a power of attorney on behalf of his child imprisoned at the Penitentiary Institution No. 6 of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice in order to treat the child abroad. The applicant's requests to the facility's administration had yielded no results.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the Service, the relevant power of attorney was subsequently issued and provided to the applicant.

(App. No. 6749-25): Inmate H. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that failing to pay wages by Penitentiary Institution No. 15 of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice, where he is serving his sentence, had occurred.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention, the respective wages were transferred to the inmate's personal account.

The health status of detainees and inmates was duly monitored; requests concerning the provision of medical examinations, and the organization of outpatient or inpatient treatment, as well as ensuring access to medicines were examined, and measures were taken in accordance with the law.

(App.No. 1688-25): Applicant D. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that his spouse, suffering from an oncological condition and diagnosed with liver cirrhosis, is in need of medical care at the Medical Institution of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice; however, her request for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) examination has not been considered.

With the Ombudsman's intervention with the Medical Main Department of the Ministry of Justice, the applicant's spouse underwent medical examination, received the necessary treatment, and was provided with a computed tomography (CT) scan at a relevant private medical facility.

(App. No. 2287-25): Applicant R. contacted the Ombudsman's Call Centre, stating that his child detained at Penitentiary Institution No. 2 required biannual check-ups due to a cardiac stent, but that his requests had not been considered and necessary medication had not been provided, and he sought assistance.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention with the Medical Main Department of the Ministry of Justice, the applicant's child was transferred to the Medical Institution of the Penitentiary Service, underwent clinical, laboratory, and instrumental examinations; was examined by specialist doctors, and appropriate treatment was initiated.

(App. No. 3264-25): Applicant A. reached the Ombudsman's Call Centre, stating that his child held in Penitentiary Institution No. 2, suffers from HIV/AIDS, is undergoing regular treatment, but had not been provided with state-funded medication, and sought assistance.

As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention with the Medical Main Department of the Ministry of Justice, the applicant's child was provided with the necessary antiretroviral therapy (ART) and ensured daily administration.

Analysis of complaints about the right of persons held in penitentiary institutions to receive medical care indicates that difficulties in access to medical services persist. It is essential to address gaps in equipping penitentiary healthcare facilities with modern medical equipment, expanding diagnostic capacities, and strengthening human resources in this field with a view to effectively realizing this right.

Under the legislation, the right to apply for medical parole (compassionate release) is among the fundamental rights of convicted persons during the execution of sentences. The courts consider the release

of prisoners suffering from a serious illness that precludes the serving of the sentence upon an application by the prisoner, their defense counsel or legal representative, or a submission by the penitentiary institution's administration.

However, incoming complaints also revealed instances of undue delays in examining applications for release on health grounds submitted by prisoners suffering from serious illnesses; following investigations, the necessary measures were taken.

(App. No. 871-25): Applicant D. contacted the Ombudsman's Call Centre, stating that his child, serving a sentence in Penitentiary Institution No. 10, had been subjected to delays in being referred to the relevant commission for conditional early release.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention, the application for conditional early release was resubmitted to the Narimanov District Court, which granted the request and ordered the inmate's conditional early release.

In light of the above, the Ombudsman recommends strengthening monitoring and oversight in the relevant areas' penitentiary institutions, removing obstacles, including artificial barriers to changing the type of institution and substituting sentences with more lenient penalties that hinder prisoners with serious illnesses from applying for compassionate release, and taking the necessary measures to ensure the effective exercise of these rights.

The situation regarding the protection of the rights of women prisoners and juvenile detainees was also kept under the Ombudsman's review. During a complex by the Ombudsman and staff members to Penitentiary Institution No. 4 and the Juvenile Penitentiary Institution of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice, confidential meetings were held with inmates; legal awareness discussions were conducted; and information was provided on applicable international and national legal frameworks, including available remedies and preventive measures, with questions duly addressed. As a result of the visits, recommendations were issued concerning the dietary regime, the provision of medical and psychological services, as well as the organization of sports, health-related activities, and leisure time.

In addition, complaints received by the Ombudsman by women and juvenile prisoners, as well as by their family members, were duly examined, and the necessary measures were taken.

(App. No. 6001-25): Applicant S. complained to the Ombudsman, stating that her daughter, held in Penitentiary Institution No. 4, had not been provided with necessary examination and treatment for her health condition, and sought assistance.

With the Ombudsman's intervention with the Medical Main Department of the Ministry of Justice, regular medical supervision of the applicant's daughter was ensured.

(App. No. 10710-25): Juvenile inmate Z. applied to the Ombudsman, requesting assistance in establishing art and 3D graphics clubs at the Juvenile Penitentiary Institution, where he is serving his sentence.

In response to the Ombudsman's inquiry, the Service indicated that the applicant's proposal had been taken into account, that the establishment of the relevant club was under consideration, and that he would be enrolled once it was established.

In cooperation with the Penitentiary Service of the Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman continued activities promoting the moral development of juvenile offenders and supporting their social reintegration.

On the occasion of 31 December - the Day of Solidarity of World Azerbaijanis and New Year, a one-day visit to historical and cultural heritage, as well as recreational and public catering venues in Baku, was

organized for three juveniles undergoing rehabilitation at the Juvenile Penitentiary Institution (Complex) of the Penitentiary Service. The juveniles, accompanied by the Ombudsman, first visited the grave of Heydar Aliyev and the Alley of Martyrs, followed by visits to the Heydar Aliyev Center, the Icherisheher State Historical-Architectural Reserve, and the Baku Zoological Park.

Awareness-raising in this field constitutes one of the main directions of the Ombudsman's activities in protecting the rights of persons held in places of detention and inmates.

During the "Human Rights Month" initiated by the Ombudsman, staff of the Office participated in an event on "Protection and Safeguarding of Prisoners' Rights," organized by the Penitentiary Service of the Ministry of Justice and the Justice Academy. During the event, they provided information on the improvement and alignment of penitentiary legislation with international standards, progress achieved in this field, and the functioning of the Ombudsman institution as an effective legal mechanism, followed by an extensive exchange of views.

Throughout the "Child Rights Month," at an event held at the Police Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on "Offences Committed by Juveniles: Theoretical and Practical Issues," with the participation of academic staff, relevant structural units of the Ministry, representatives of the Khazar District Executive Authority, and school pupils and teachers, information was provided on the Ombudsman's activities in protecting the rights of children, including juveniles in conflict with the law, and the prospects for cooperation in this field were discussed.

A series of awareness-raising activities was conducted in penitentiary institutions with the participation of the Ombudsman and staff members, during which inmates were informed about national, regional, and international human rights instruments, as well as the provisions of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and their questions were answered.

Pursuant to Article 1.7 of the Constitutional Law, applications to the Ombudsman for pardon submitted by convicted persons, their counsel, representatives, or legal representatives were analyzed, and, taking into account the requirements of the Regulation on Pardons approved by Presidential Decree No. 538 of 18 July 2001, proposals were regularly submitted to the Pardon Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan; the Ombudsman also participated in the meetings of that Commission.

Pursuant to the Presidential Order of 26 May 2025 "On the pardon of a number of convicted persons," 220 individuals were pardoned, with the Ombudsman's proposals taken into account.

As part of the State's humanistic policy, the parliament, at the initiative of the President, adopted on 19 December 2025 a Resolution declaring an amnesty on the occasion of the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty." This Resolution, the country's 13th amnesty act, covered individuals who participated in combat operations for the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, including the Patriotic War and anti-terror operations; relatives of those killed or missing; persons maimed or bereaved due to military provocations during the Patriotic War; persons deported from Armenia due to ethnic cleansing, terrorism and genocide; internally displaced persons; as well as women, juveniles at the time of the offense, and other vulnerable groups. Covering more than 20,000 persons overall, the Resolution is the most extensive amnesty act adopted to date.

The Ombudsman visited Penitentiary Institution No. 4 and the Juvenile Penitentiary Institution of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice in relation to the implementation of the Amnesty Act. She provided detailed information on human rights reforms and humanizing penal policy, and emphasized that the President's initiative to declare an amnesty on the occasion of the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty" is a continuation of this humanistic approach. The Ombudsman also congratulated the persons granted amnesty and their family members, highlighting the importance of the social reintegration of the released persons.

Within a short period, a total of 13 amnesty acts has been adopted, and 71 pardon decrees and orders have been issued in the country, resulting in the release of tens of thousands of convicted persons from the

unserved part of their sentences. During the Ombudsman's tenure, a total of 900 persons, including 21 in 2025, were pardoned upon the Ombudsman's petition.

1.4. National Preventive Mechanism Mandate of the Ombudsman

The activities of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) of the Ombudsman are carried out on the basis of the Constitutional Law and the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) (the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of 90 Member States that joined the binding document). The NPM, as an effective mechanism, plays a significant role in addressing the possible instances of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The monitoring visits conducted within these activities, results-based reports, cooperation with relevant stakeholders, and awareness-raising activities to increase public knowledge are key factors for strengthening the protection of human rights.

During the reporting year, monitoring visits were carried out to institutions where persons cannot leave at their free will within the framework of the Ombudsman's NPM activities under the OPCAT. In particular, a total of 112 visits were conducted to the facilities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including its main departments, stations, units and TDPs; 92 visits to institutions under the Ministry of Science and Education; 84 visits to establishments of the Ministry of Justice Penitentiary Service; 31 visits to institutions under the Ministry of Health; 21 visits to facilities subordinated to the MLSPP; 6 visits to institutions of the State Migration Service; 5 visits to guardhouses and disciplinary military units of the Ministry of Defense; 3 visits to facilities of the State Security Service; and 1 visit to the TDP of the Main Department for Preliminary Investigation of Tax Crimes under the State Tax Service of the Ministry of Economy.

Overall, 355 monitoring visits were carried out of which 93 were unannounced visits. During these visits, a total of 3,462 persons were received and interviewed.

During monitoring visits of the institutions where persons cannot leave at their free will, the detention or accommodation conditions, record-keeping, the quality of healthcare, the ratio and the quality of food, and ensuring the rights, etc., were focused on; and private and confidential meetings with detainees were held. During every monitoring, the status of implementation of the Ombudsman's previous recommendations was followed on.

The Ombudsman and the members of the National Preventive Group (NPG) interviewed the detained persons in a confidential manner; their applications were investigated; measures were taken to address them on the spot; and if it was deemed necessary, the competent authorities were requested.

Persons of Armenian origin who have been involved in the investigation as accused persons under the relevant articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on whom a measure of restraint in the form of detention was imposed, and who are charged with crimes, have been interviewed in the institutions. During monitoring visits, issues related to conditions of detention, treatment, and access to medical services were assessed. They were informed about the Ombudsman's powers and were provided with materials in their own language reflecting their rights.

In accordance with Article 19.4 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the authority conducting the criminal proceedings must explain the rights of the suspect or accused person and ensure their right to access legal counsel from the moment of detention, arrest, or, respectively, prior to the first interrogation as a suspect, or from the moment charges are formally brought against the accused. In addition, under Article 15.1.3 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Persons Detained in Places of Detention," detained or arrested persons are entitled to be informed in writing, in a language they understand, of their rights and obligations immediately upon admission to a place of detention and during their custody, along with the internal disciplinary rules, including the detention regime, as well as the procedures for submitting proposals, applications, and complaints, and to retain this written information in their possession.

During monitoring visits, it was revealed that in a number of cases, administratively detained persons were not granted access to legal assistance from the moment of detention, but only upon being brought before the court, namely, during the court hearing. In some cases, alleged waivers of the right to legal counsel were not supported by written statements. Moreover, some detainees reported not being informed of this right at all.

Such cases point to gaps in ensuring access to legal assistance and the right to defense for the detained or arrested persons, as well as shortcomings in informing detained or arrested persons by the authority conducting the criminal proceedings.

In accordance with legal requirements, the authority conducting criminal proceedings and staff of TDPs must ensure that detained or arrested persons are able to inform their close relatives or other relevant persons with legitimate interests by telephone immediately upon arrival at the place of detention. It is particularly important that TDP administrations notify family members of elderly persons, juveniles, and those unable to do so themselves due to mental conditions. However, monitoring findings, as well as analysis of requests from relatives seeking assistance in locating detained persons, indicate that there are certain difficulties in ensuring this right.

A detained or arrested person must undergo a medical examination by healthcare personnel within 24 hours of admission to a place of detention. A medical record must be established for each individual, and where no healthcare staff is available at the detention facility, a qualified doctor must be invited from a local state medical institution.

Monitoring visits revealed that, in some cases, newly admitted persons were not subjected to an initial medical examination, relevant medical records were not maintained, and, where necessary, requests for medical staff from local state healthcare institutions have not yielded any results.

In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen coordinated action to ensure the availability of medical personnel within facilities and to address organizational challenges in engaging healthcare staff from local state medical institutions where none are present, as well as to introduce electronic medical record-keeping.

Monitoring visits revealed that some TDPs were not supplied with medications for 2025 and that there was a need to strengthen oversight of the storage conditions and expiration dates of available medicines.

While detention conditions in facilities under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan generally meet standards, some TDPs across the country require routine repairs, including the creation of appropriate conditions for overnight stays in temporary holding rooms at police departments and stations.

In some TDPs, there was a lack of separate prayer rooms, as well as meeting and storage rooms, and in certain cases, medications were kept in the office of the facility head, alongside other shortcomings. For example, during a monitoring visit to the TDP of the Gakh District Police Department, it was found that there were no designated storage, prayer, or meeting rooms; the medical room was used for storage and prayer, while meetings were held in the investigation room. Also, contrary to regulations, there were single-occupancy cells in the facility, and thus, detention conditions did not meet international standards.

In addition, the review of documentation practices in TDPs revealed further shortcomings. It was found that some staff at TDPs were not familiar with the "Internal Disciplinary Rules of Temporary Detention Facilities." In addition, it was observed that corrections in official registers were made using improper methods. Furthermore, in the duty unit's "Register of Persons Brought to City, District, and Line Police Authorities," the sections indicating the dates of admission for certain individuals were left incomplete.

During a monitoring visit to the TDP of the Zaqatala District Police Department, it was found that the heating system was not functioning, corrections had been made to dates and times in official registers using improper methods, and in the duty unit's "Register of Persons Brought to City, District, and Line Police Authorities," recent entries lacked serial numbers, required follow-up actions were left incomplete, and

some fields were either left blank or did not indicate the time of admission.

The issues concerned were brought to the attention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and shortcomings regarding the TDP cells were addressed, and rooms for worship and meetings were organized.

In addition, the shortcomings found in the registers of duty stations and TDPs of the Gakh and Zagatala police departments were eliminated, and the administration of the regional police authorities was instructed to keep the situation under control.

Although the construction and inauguration of new penitentiary institutions have significantly reduced the overcrowding within the last years, as observed during monitoring visits, this problem still remained unresolved in some penitentiary institutions, particularly in pre-trial detention facilities. The increased number of detainees compared to the actual capacity of the facility negatively affected all services and activities within such establishments.

Therefore, it is essential to take necessary complex measures to address the overcrowding. Particularly based on the requirements related to the decriminalization of offences stated in the Presidential Decree No. 2668 dated 10 February 2017, "On Improving activities in the penitentiary system, humanizing criminal policy, and expanding the application of alternative sanctions and procedural coercive measures not involving deprivation of liberty," it is important to amend the legislation regarding broadening the application of alternatives to punishments, as well as to eliminate functional impediments to the substitution of the unserved portion of a sentence with a less severe penalty, the early conditional release from the unserved portion of a sentence, the wide use of conditional deprivation of liberty in practice, and exemption from sentence due to illness.

The incoming applications also include the problems in the implementation of the right to telephone contact of detainees held in penitentiary institutions with their families. As a consequence of investigations of those applications, it was found that the detainees, deprived of this right, were placed in the disciplinary cell within the institution where they serve a sentence.

The increased number of incoming applications regarding the violation of the right to telephone contact of detainees, were of similar content. For this reason, it is recommended to improve the activities of the "889" Call Center of the Penitentiary Service and to notify the families of detainees on whom such disciplinary penalties are imposed accordingly and in a timely manner.

In general, the analyses of investigations show that the imposition of penalties in the form of placement in a disciplinary cell has increased. Heavy and constant disciplinary measures imposed may deteriorate the mental condition of prisoners, creating negative emotions and feelings for protest and losing confidence, as well as impede their rehabilitation and social integration processes. In this case, the corrective effect of punishment decreases, and the intended outcome is not achieved. Moreover, a strict disciplinary environment may increase aggression, potentially leading to further disciplinary violations and even raising the risk of reoffending.

In this regard, priority should be given to alternative and less restrictive disciplinary measures provided by law, instead of sanctions such as placement in a disciplinary isolation unit, which entail significant restrictions on inmates' rights. Furthermore, it is essential to provide effective psychological support in such cases.

During the visit to the Temporary Accommodation Centre in Baku under the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, a number of shortcomings were identified. Although a psychologist position exists within the Centre, it remains vacant, which is a matter of concern. Migrants' separation from family, unfamiliar surroundings, restrictions on their rights, and social isolation may cause stress and distress, necessitating professional psychological support.

During the visit, some migrants reported difficulties in exercising their right to make phone calls and indicated that conditions for timely access to bathing or shower facilities were not adequately ensured. It should be noted that during a follow-up visit, these issues raised by migrants were found to have been addressed.

During a follow-up visit to the Baku Temporary Accommodation Center, it was observed that a number of previously identified deficiencies had been addressed. A new doctor and psychologist have commenced their duties, and necessary measures have been taken to improve the provision of medical services and psychological support.

During a visit to the Yevlakh District Temporary Accommodation Center, it was observed that a number of deficiencies identified during previous visits had been eliminated. In particular, the Center's medical room has been equipped with a refrigerator and air conditioning to ensure that medicines requiring specific storage conditions maintain their quality throughout their shelf life. In addition, an air conditioning unit has been installed in the meeting room. An information board displaying the contact numbers of foreign diplomatic missions has also been prepared to facilitate communication for migrants.

Throughout the year, regular visits were also conducted to institutions under the Ministries of Science and Education, Health, and Labor and Social Protection of the Population, where individuals are not permitted to leave of their own free will. In order to assess conditions of detention and treatment, children, PWDs, women, and the elderly accommodated in these institutions were received both individually and collectively, and the state of protection of their rights was examined on site.

The existing conditions, access to education and healthcare services, the provision of social services, and the overall enjoyment of other rights were analyzed, and appeals were made to the relevant authorities to address identified needs.

NPM members conducted visits to the guardhouses of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Military Police Divisions of the Military Police Department of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, located in Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, and Khankendi cities. During these visits, the conditions of detention, the treatment of detained military servicemen, and the compliance of relevant documentation justifying their detention with applicable legislation were examined. Recommendations were communicated to the heads of the respective institutions regarding the improvement of detention conditions and documentation, as well as ensuring that the treatment of detainees is organized in accordance with established regulations.

One of the main areas of the Ombudsman's activity in its capacity as the NPM is the organization of legal awareness-raising activities on various human rights topics. These activities aim to enhance the level of awareness, as well as to promote the development of legal understanding and legal culture among persons held in institutions that they are not permitted to leave of their own free will, and among the staff working in such institutions.

Within the framework of the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty," a training session on the topic "Fundamental Safeguards for Persons Detained by Police - International Standards" was organized by the Ombudsman at the Police Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

During the training, information was provided, and presentations were delivered on visits carried out within the Ombudsman's NPM mandate, relevant international standards and mechanisms, legal assistance, the fundamental rights of persons held in police custody, and other related areas of activity.

In addition, a series of training sessions were continued at the Police and Justice Academies with the aim of informing judges, justice officials, law enforcement personnel, and staff of other relevant institutions about the requirements of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

It should be noted that, at the initiative of the Ombudsman, awareness-raising materials entitled "National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture" were published in Braille for visually impaired persons held in institutions that they are not permitted to leave of their own free will. In addition, an informational publication titled "10 Questions - 10 Answers" for military personnel was produced and made available to the target audience.

1.5. Activities of the Ombudsman Under the Independent Monitoring Mechanism

Over recent years, as a result of consistent human rights reforms implemented in the country, significant amendments have been made to the Constitutional Law to ensure the full alignment of the Ombudsman's mandate with the "Paris Principles relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions," endorsed by United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 48/134 dated 20 December 1993 (hereinafter "the Paris Principles"), as well as with other international legal instruments. New areas of activity have also been defined.

These amendments are of considerable importance not only in terms of expanding the Ombudsman's powers and strengthening its independence, but also in ensuring the effective implementation of international human rights obligations.

It should be noted that, pursuant to the latest amendments to the Constitutional Law, the Ombudsman has also been granted the functions of an independent monitoring mechanism (hereinafter IMM) for overseeing and promoting the implementation of the CRPD, the CRC, and equality, and non-discrimination.

The legislative amendments not only provide for the establishment of monitoring groups within the Ombudsman Office for the implementation of the IMM functions, but also define the status and powers of these groups.

In this regard, pursuant to the relevant order of the Ombudsman, monitoring groups were established for overseeing and promoting the implementation of the CRPD, and the CRC, as well as for monitoring and promoting the right to equality and non-discrimination.

As an integral part of the Ombudsman's constitutional mandate, the IMM function has established an institutional framework for the prompt, objective, and impartial assessment of human rights situations. Within the framework of this activity, aligned with the Paris Principles' requirements on independence, broad mandate, and effectiveness, risks of violations are identified in advance through preventive oversight methods, the root causes of systemic issues are examined, and substantiated recommendations are submitted to state authorities with a view to promoting legal reforms.

As one of the key functional directions of the Ombudsman's mandate, IMM serves to ensure an objective assessment of the actual state of human rights and freedoms, promote transparency and accountability in the activities of state authorities, and strengthen institutional responsibility for the protection of human rights within the national legal system.

Monitoring Group Activities on the Implementation and Promotion of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Monitoring Group on the Implementation and Promotion of the CRPD (hereinafter CRPD Monitoring Group) monitors, evaluates, and promotes the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of PWDs, while supporting their equal participation in society. The CRPD Monitoring Group also oversees the implementation of obligations under the relevant Convention and provides proposals and recommendations to address identified violations.

Within this framework, CRPD Monitoring Group members conducted monitoring visits to specialized education, healthcare, penitentiary, and social service institutions across the country. During these visits, issues related to the living conditions of PWDs, their social challenges, and the extent to which their rights to health, education, and other areas are realized were assessed. Meetings were held with PWDs, including children with disabilities, as well as with the management and staff of the respective institutions, and necessary measures were taken to address identified shortcomings.

In accordance with Article 5 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, awareness-raising discussions were held with the management and staff of institutions to address discrimination, stereotypes, and inappropriate language expressions toward PWDs, and recommendations were provided.

Accessibility in places of deprivation of liberty, psychiatric, social service, specialized education, healthcare, and other facilities, including the adaptation of existing infrastructure to the needs of PWDs, remains a key concern. Given the particular challenges associated with older buildings, it is necessary to explore options for improving accessibility in such facilities, while ensuring that accessibility is integrated into the design and construction of new institutions in line with universal design standards.

During monitoring visits to social service institutions under the MLSPP, staff shortages and the need to fill vacant positions were identified, which adversely affect the efficiency of social services provided to PWDs.

Furthermore, the Shelter and Social Rehabilitation Institution for persons from vulnerable population groups under the Social Services Agency of the Ministry was monitored. During the visit, the protection of residents' rights and the adequacy of documentation were reviewed, conditions were assessed, individual interviews with residents were held, and printed informational materials were provided.

Overcrowding in psychiatric institutions under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan remains concerns. Furthermore, staff shortages, particularly among doctors and mid-level medical personnel, continue to create difficulties.

During a monitoring visit to the Baku Pre-Trial Detention Facility of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the treatment and conditions of detention of women with disabilities were assessed. Particular attention was given to the protection of their rights and the adequacy of services provided. Relevant issues were reviewed, and on-site recommendations were issued to address identified concerns. Legal awareness-raising discussions were conducted with detainees to promote the protection of their rights and to prevent potential violations. Complaints submitted to the Ombudsman were also received and duly registered for further consideration. Within the framework of the monitoring, a meeting was also held with the head physician of the facility, and recommendations were made to improve medical documentation for detainees with disabilities.

During monitoring visits to institutions operating under the Ministry of Science and Education, it was determined that certain shortcomings remain unresolved. In particular, the need to enhance the knowledge and skills of psychologists, social workers, and speech therapists in working with children with disabilities remains a key priority, including ensuring their participation in relevant training programs.

Issues related to the provision of social services were assessed across these institutions, including social, daily living, medical, psychological, pedagogical, and other support services. The implementation of rehabilitation measures and the effective organization of leisure time were also examined, and the relevant recommendations were provided.

The findings of the monitoring visits indicate that there is a need to further improve the provision of food and medical care for individuals living in, accommodated in, or receiving treatment at many institutions. In addition, measures are required to strengthen the social protection of medical and other staff.

Ensuring accessibility to enable PWDs to lead a dignified life, regardless of the type of disability or the degree of limitation in their daily activities, and creating conditions for their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others constitutes one of the key priorities of social policy. This principle serves to promote inclusiveness in society and, ultimately, the effective realization of human rights. Although important steps have been taken in recent years in this area nationwide, a number of challenges still remain. In particular, it is essential to address existing gaps in the full adaptation of the physical environment, the equal accessibility of public services for all, and unhindered access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Ensuring that the needs of PWDs are taken into account in the design and construction of infrastructure facilities and residential buildings, as well as adapting existing infrastructure, residential buildings, and public transport, particularly metro stations for their use, is of particular importance. In this regard, it is essential to update design standards, strengthen oversight of accessibility requirements during the

construction process, and conduct regular monitoring of existing facilities to assess their compliance. It is also necessary to identify existing shortcomings and take appropriate measures to address them, as well as to develop concrete implementation mechanisms to ensure accessibility in metro systems and other modes of public transport.

Conducting analyses of the compliance of national legislation with international standards in the field of ensuring the rights of PWDs, identifying existing gaps, and preparing relevant proposals constitute one of the main areas of activity of the CRPD Monitoring Group. It should be noted that efforts to harmonize national legislation with the Convention are ongoing, taking into account proposals put forward by the Ombudsman with a view to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

In the process of introducing amendments to existing normative legal acts, as well as drafting new legislation, due attention has been given, based on obligations arising from the Convention to the appropriate revision of certain terminology relating to PWDs. In this context, proposals put forward by the Ombudsman have been taken into account, and the term “persons under 18 with a determined disability” has been replaced with “children with disabilities” in the relevant normative legal acts.

In addition, in order to ensure that PWDs can access information without barriers and freely express their views, amendments were made to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, taking into account proposals put forward by the Ombudsman. As a result, Azerbaijani Sign Language was officially recognized as a means of communication for persons with total hearing impairment in the oral use of the state language of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, with the introduction of new Article 12-1 (“Ensuring Access to Information for Persons with Disabilities”), the promotion of subtitling of audiovisual works was established as a legal obligation. As a result, practical conditions have been created to enable nationwide terrestrial television broadcasters financed from the state budget, as well as those with public broadcaster status, to provide sign language interpretation of information programs broadcast during prime time.

Attaching importance to the role of international cooperation in supporting national efforts to achieve the objectives and purposes of the Convention, the necessary measures were implemented in cooperation with international and regional organizations, as well as CSOs, particularly organizations of PWDs.

The III Global Disability Summit, jointly organized by the Governments of Germany and Jordan and the International Disability Alliance, was held in Berlin with the participation of more than 4,000 individuals from nearly 100 countries, including high-level government representatives and representatives of civil society institutions. As a key outcome of the Summit, the Amman-Berlin Declaration on Global Disability Inclusion was adopted.

Within the framework of the Summit, which was also attended by members of the Monitoring Group, extensive discussions were held on promoting inclusive employment, ensuring accessibility in education, enhancing the accessibility of infrastructure, and fostering the participation of PWDs in public life and decision-making processes.

It should be noted that the Amman-Berlin Declaration on Global Disability Inclusion contains forward-looking commitments aimed at strengthening the principles of inclusion, accessibility, equal opportunities, and participation at the global level, in line with the CRPD requirements. It also identifies the “15 percent for the 15 percent” principle as a key target for advancing international cooperation.

This principle envisages allocating at least 15 percent of resources for PWDs, who constitute approximately 15 percent of the world’s population meaning that at least 15 percent of international development programs, as well as projects implemented at the state or donor level, should be directed towards the inclusion of PWDs.

The Declaration also expresses the intention to achieve the set objectives by 2028, when the next Global Disability Summit is scheduled to take place.

The Ombudsman considers that the accession of our country to the Amman-Berlin Declaration on Global

Disability Inclusion, in line with the CRPD requirements, will contribute to the more effective implementation of international obligations in the field of protecting the rights of PWDs, the further improvement of national legislation, and the strengthening of social inclusion policies, thereby reinforcing the country's international standing in building an inclusive society. To this end, it is proposed to ensure the integration of the commitments under the declaration into state programs.

With a view to protecting and promoting the rights of PWDs, discussions were held within the framework of events organized with the initiative and participation of the Ombudsman, in cooperation with state authorities and civil society institutions on the measures taken and the tasks ahead in ensuring social justice, fostering an inclusive environment, and improving the accessibility of services across various sectors for PWDs.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the fact that, at the initiative of the Ombudsman, a meeting was held with members of the Azerbaijan National Amputee Football Team. During the meeting, detailed information was provided on the main areas of the Ombudsman's activities in ensuring and protecting the rights of PWDs, as well as on the work carried out within the framework of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism function.

Within the framework of the event, emphasis was placed on the importance of ensuring the social rehabilitation of PWDs, particularly those who have lost their health as a result of mine explosions, as well as on promoting their active participation in public, social, and sporting life as equal members of society. Furthermore, the legal and social significance of strengthening cooperation between state authorities and civil society institutions in this field was highlighted, along with the importance of creating equal opportunities for PWDs and fostering an inclusive environment.

During the meeting, a video prepared at the initiative of the Ombudsman dedicated to the protection of the rights of PWDs, their integration into society, and the promotion of equal opportunities was presented.

Monitoring Group Activities on the Implementation and Promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Monitoring Group on the Implementation and Promotion of the CRC Convention (hereinafter, the CRC Monitoring Group) carries out activities related to the monitoring, assessment, and promotion of the state of realization of children's rights. It also provides proposals and recommendations aimed at addressing identified violations and oversees the implementation of obligations under the CRC.

During the reporting year, based on communications addressed by the Ombudsman to the relevant central executive authorities, those bodies and the institutions subordinate to them were informed of the Ombudsman's new mandate under the IMM functions.

With a view to assessing the state of realization of children's rights, monitoring visits were carried out by the Ombudsman and members of the CRC Monitoring Group in educational, healthcare, penitentiary, social service, and other institutions located in the capital and the regions. During the monitoring visits, inspections of administrative buildings were conducted, meetings were held with staff and residents, relevant recommendations were provided to the management of the institutions, and necessary measures were taken to address identified shortcomings.

Within the framework of the Ombudsman's Independent Monitoring Mechanism activities, a visit was conducted to Special Boarding School No. 5 in Baku, operating under the Baku City Education Department of the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, with a view to assessing the state of realization of children's rights. During the visit, the Ombudsman inspected the dormitory, dining, medical, classroom, and other administrative facilities, and reviewed the organization of children's education, leisure time, nutrition, and record-keeping. In addition, the Ombudsman met with the students, listened to their views, and provided them with information on their rights and responsibilities, as well as on the procedures for submitting complaints to the Ombudsman. During the monitoring, the institution's management provided the Ombudsman with detailed information on the school's activities and current conditions. At the initiative of the Ombudsman, the institution also presented the school with a special awareness-raising publication entitled *"National Preventive Mechanism on the Prevention of*

Torture”, prepared in Braille for persons with severe visual impairments, along with publications on children’s rights. As a result of the monitoring, and taking into account the requirements of the relevant Convention, the Ombudsman provided the institution’s management with appropriate recommendations aimed at ensuring the more effective realization of children’s rights.

One of the key issues identified during the monitoring visits to this institution was that, due to a shortage of specialized mathematics teachers in the Russian-language section, the subject was being taught in Azerbaijani. Confidential meetings with students revealed that this situation hinders students in the Russian language section from fully understanding the material and negatively affects the overall quality of instruction.

During a visit conducted by the CRC Monitoring Group to Integrated Training Boarding School No. 11 in Baku, operating under the Baku City Education Department of the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education, it was identified that the position of a medical doctor remains vacant, which necessitates the adoption of additional measures to ensure regular monitoring of the children’s health. In addition, it was observed that the condition of household items used by the children was not satisfactory and did not meet required standards, and it was recommended that measures be taken to replace and upgrade them.

Monitoring was conducted, and an awareness-raising meeting was held by the CRC Monitoring Group at the Anton Makarenko Republican Gymnasium with a focus on humanities, operating under the Baku City Education Department of the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education. During the monitoring, meetings were held with the institution’s management, psychologist, and teaching staff. In addition, individual discussions were conducted with students, during which they were informed about their rights and responsibilities.

Following the monitoring, recommendations were provided to the institution’s management on the results of the visit, as well as on further strengthening the protection of children’s rights within the institution, including with regard to standards of conduct towards students and the organization of psychological services.

Monitoring was conducted, and an awareness-raising meeting was held by the Monitoring Group at the Anton Makarenko Republican Gymnasium with a focus on humanities, operating under the Baku City Education Department of the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education.

During the monitoring, meetings were held with the institution’s management, psychologist, and teaching staff. In addition, individual discussions were conducted with students, during which they were informed about their rights and responsibilities.

Following the monitoring, recommendations were provided to the institution’s management on the results of the visit, as well as on further strengthening the protection of children’s rights within the institution, including with regard to standards of conduct towards students and the organization of psychological services.

During a visit by representatives of the Ombudsman to the territories liberated from occupation, the conditions established at Nursery-Kindergarten No. 1 in Khankendi, operating under the Karabakh Regional Education Department of the State Agency for Preschool and General Education under the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, were reviewed within the framework of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism, along with the overall situation regarding the realization of children’s rights.

Legal awareness-raising discussions were conducted with the institution’s staff, and relevant recommendations were provided on standards of conduct in working with children. During the inspection, it was also identified that there is a need to fill a psychologist position at the institution.

In general, once again emphasizing the necessity of establishing psychologist positions in preschool education institutions for the purpose of assessing children's psychological well-being and ensuring their adaptation, the proposal put forward by the Ombudsman in previous annual reports remains relevant.

Taking into account the importance of ensuring children's right to health and development at an early age, it is once again proposed to introduce the position of a "child psychologist" into the "Model Staffing Structure of Kindergartens" (Annex No. 1) and the "Model Staffing Structure of Nursery-Kindergartens" (Annex No. 2), approved by Resolution No. 61 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 29 May 1996 on the "Model Staffing Structure of Budget-Funded Preschool Education Institutions."

Monitoring conducted in boarding-type general education institutions has revealed that the issue of insufficient staffing for night caregivers and psychologists persists. There remains a need to introduce relevant amendments to the legislation to increase the number of these positions, particularly to ensure the health and safety of children in such institutions.

Taking the above into account, the Ombudsman's proposal to amend Resolution No. 157 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 23 June 2006, entitled "On the Model Staffing Structures of Boarding Schools of General Education, Boarding School of General Inclusive Education, Sanatorium-Type Boarding General Education Schools, Boarding Lyceums, and Boarding Gymnasiums", to increase the number of night caregiver and psychologist positions, remains relevant.

Based on the monitoring conducted at the Juvenile Penitentiary Institution of the Penitentiary Service under the Ministry of Justice, it should be noted that there is a need to improve the quality of education provided at the school operating within the institution.

Overall, it should be noted that increasing awareness of children's rights among personnel in child-care institutions and individuals in regular contact with children, promoting the principle of the "best interests of the child" as set out in Article 3 of the relevant Convention, and conducting regular monitoring are essential for effectively addressing challenges in this area.

It should also be noted that the "Action Plan for 2025-2030 on Enhancing the Quality of Vocational Education in Penitentiary Institutions and Improving Existing Infrastructure," approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 25 June 2025, is of particular importance in ensuring that vocational education for juveniles serving sentences is aligned with modern standards and with current and future labor market demands, as well as in strengthening the capacities of learners within the framework of vocational education.

One of the key areas of activity of the CRC Monitoring Group is the review of the compliance of existing legislation in the relevant field with international standards, the identification of gaps, and the development of proposals.

In this regard, extensive work has been carried out to analyze the implementation of national legislation and state programs in the field of the protection of children's rights, as well as to provide opinions and recommendations.

Pursuant to paragraph 5.2 of the "Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Children for 2020-2030," the preparation of the draft "Action Plan for 2026-2030 on the Implementation of the Strategy on Children" has been envisaged.

Representatives of the Ombudsman Office participated in discussions as members of the relevant Working Group established with the involvement of competent authorities for the purpose of drafting the document, and provided their views and proposals.

It should be noted that the proposals submitted by the Ombudsman, taking into account the requirements of the relevant Convention and the CRC (committee) recommendations, and covering various aspects of children's rights have been reflected in the draft document.

In order to ensure the implementation of the “Action Plan for 2020-2025 on the Implementation of the Strategy on Children,” approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 27 November 2020, the adoption of the “Criteria for Monitoring the State of Implementation of Children’s Rights across All Sectors” by Resolution No. 94 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 1 April 2025, as well as the “Requirements for the Quality of Services Provided in State and Non-State Childcare Institutions” by Resolution No. 68 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 10 March 2025, is of particular importance for assessing the state of realization of children’s rights and ensuring the implementation of the Convention.

It should also be noted that the proposal put forward by the Ombudsman in previous annual reports to review and align with modern standards the norms approved by Resolution No. 103 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 9 March 1994, entitled *“On the Application of Food Norms for Citizens in Educational Institutions, Hospitals, and Other Public Institutions in the Social Sector,”* has been taken into account. Accordingly, by Resolution No. 314 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 21 October 2025, the “Average Daily Food Norms in Medical Institutions,” “Food Norms in Educational Institutions,” and “Food Norms in Social Care Institutions” were approved. This Resolution is of particular importance in ensuring children’s right to health as enshrined in the Convention.

A representative of the Ombudsman and a member of the CRC Monitoring Group participated in meetings of the Working Group established by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, composed of representatives of relevant state authorities on the implementation of the relevant Convention, and provided their views and proposals.

Members of the Monitoring Group participated in discussions held during meetings of the relevant group established pursuant to the “Rules on the Activities of Monitoring and Coordination Groups in the Field of the Prevention of Domestic Violence,” approved by Resolution No. 367 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 30 July 2024, and expressed their views and proposals on the protection of children’s rights.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 28 June 2024 (No. 1198-VIQD), on amendments to the Family Code, the Criminal Code, and the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which entered into force on 1 July 2025, is of particular importance in preventing early and consanguineous marriages, as well as in implementing the CRC recommendations in this area and those put forward by the Ombudsman.

Taking into account the recommendations set out in the Committee’s Concluding Observations on the country’s most recent periodic report, it is considered necessary to develop procedures for the prevention and identification of violence, as well as for reporting and responding to such cases, and to enhance the knowledge and skills of professionals in this field.

Monitoring Group Activities on Ensuring the Right to Equality and Preventing Discrimination. The Monitoring Group on Ensuring the Right to Equality and Preventing Discrimination (hereinafter - the Equality Monitoring Group) oversees the implementation of the right to equality, conducting systematic monitoring and assessments, promoting equal opportunities, analyzing the causes and consequences of discrimination, and providing recommendations to address identified issues.

The Equality Monitoring Group plays a key role in ensuring legal equality, preventing discrimination, and strengthening the effectiveness of human rights protection.

During the reporting year, in line with its mandate, the Equality Monitoring Group conducted monitoring visits in Baku and its surrounding areas, as well as in the regions, to assess the implementation of the right to equality. The findings of these visits were included in reports published on the Ombudsman’s official website and social media platforms, and relevant communications were submitted to the competent authorities.

The monitoring conducted in the Yevlakh and Khachmaz districts aimed to assess the socio-economic conditions of Roma (Gypsy) communities, including their access to education, healthcare, and employment, as well as their opportunities for public participation, and to identify existing challenges and formulate

relevant recommendations. During the monitoring, meetings were held with local communities, and anonymous interviews and surveys were conducted; information was also collected from local executive authorities, and cooperation was established with CSOs.

The monitoring revealed that the majority of Roma communities living in the Yevlakh and Khachmaz districts consist of children and young people. Furthermore, the lack of birth registration, school dropout, early marriage, and a nomadic lifestyle significantly limit their access to social and other services.

It was found that school attendance among children in Yevlakh district is low, while in Khachmaz district, children tend to leave school after completing primary education. Although access to healthcare services is generally available, challenges related to hygiene and sanitation, particularly in Yevlakh due to the nomadic lifestyle, increase associated risks.

Employment is largely limited to informal and seasonal work, with limited access to formal job opportunities. Living conditions in Yevlakh are informal and do not meet basic hygiene standards, whereas in Khachmaz they are relatively more stable, though still constrained in terms of infrastructure.

Overall, social integration remains weak, and significant gaps persist across various areas.

The findings of the monitoring indicate that there is a need to improve birth registration practices for Roma communities living in these areas and to ensure the registration of all births; to strengthen preventive and oversight measures to address school dropout and prevent early marriages; to introduce tailored social service mechanisms for communities with a nomadic lifestyle; to facilitate access to healthcare services and enhance hygiene awareness; to expand employment opportunities to support socio-economic integration, including the formalization of informal work; and to improve access to utility services.

The next monitoring was conducted in Sumgayit city to assess the level of physical accessibility for PWDs in public and state facilities, evaluate compliance with relevant applicable regulatory standards and identify existing gaps. The monitoring revealed that, in many facilities, ramps, entrances, and sanitary facilities did not meet required standards, while in some cases no accessibility adaptations had been made. The absence of tactile paving, audio and visual alerts, and directional signage creates barriers for people with visual and hearing impairments.

The current situation limits equal access of PWDs to public services, weakens social integration, and leads to violations of their rights.

In this regard, it is necessary to reconstruct ramps in accordance with applicable standards, install portable ramps, lower entrance thresholds, equip ramps with handrails on both sides, install tactile paving, Braille signage and audio-visual signals, adapt lifts and sanitary facilities, and, more broadly, incorporate universal design principles into the city's master plan.

A monitoring visit was conducted in the Buzovna settlement of Baku's Khazar district to examine complaints from residents of multi-apartment buildings on Mustafa Subhi, Rasim Imanov, and nearby streets regarding prolonged interruptions in water supply, while certain nearby facilities, such as country houses, car wash stations, and large private gardens have continuous access to high-pressure water. The monitoring also sought to assess residents' access to drinking water and to identify potential instances of discrimination. A comprehensive report outlining the findings of the monitoring was subsequently prepared.

The monitoring findings indicate disparities in water supply among subscribers paying the equivalent tariffs. Families on the upper floors face significant difficulties, while certain facilities continue to benefit from uninterrupted access to high-pressure supply. The situation is further exacerbated by outdated infrastructure, increasing numbers of subscribers, and the inefficient use of water resources. These conditions adversely affect equality and consumer rights.

In this regard, the report puts forward recommendations to upgrade water supply lines in the affected areas and align them with the number of subscribers, install additional pumping systems, and prioritize residential

buildings in water distribution. It also recommends introducing dedicated and water-efficient systems for irrigating green spaces and other facilities.

Monitoring conducted at beaches along the Baku and Sumgayit coastlines of the Caspian Sea revealed that lifeguard staff are composed exclusively of men and that official recruitment announcements restrict applications to male candidates.

In this regard, it is necessary to eliminate existing barriers to the recruitment of women as lifeguards in order to ensure gender equality, create the necessary conditions for the training of female lifeguards, and carry out awareness-raising activities in this field.

Monitoring carried out in historic buildings located on H.Z. Taghiyev Street in the Sabail district of Baku revealed that staircases and railings were in a hazardous condition, that certain residents were unable to access and use elevators, and that unlawful interventions had been made to the architectural appearance of the buildings. These deficiencies pose a risk to the life and health of residents and may give rise to instances of unequal treatment.

In this connection, a report entitled “On Discrimination and Human Rights Violations in Historic Buildings Located in the Center of Baku City” was prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, together with proposals and recommendations aimed at addressing the identified shortcomings.

Monitoring conducted regarding the application of the “Airport” taxi tariff at Heydar Aliyev International Airport revealed that prices had been artificially inflated, passengers’ rights to equality and freedom of choice had been restricted, and that they were subjected to an additional financial burden. It was further established that drivers incurred economic losses, and that the principles of entrepreneurship and fair competition had been undermined.

In this regard, a report “On the application of taxi tariffs at the Heydar Aliyev International Airport: Violation of the Right to Equality and Signs of Discrimination” was prepared and submitted to the State Service for Antimonopoly and Consumer Market Control under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the purpose of examining the facts and taking measures in accordance with the legislation.

It should be noted that the monitoring was carried out on the basis of a comparative analysis of actual fare prices (for trips to and from the airport to the city), anonymous interviews with passengers, taxi drivers and airport staff, a review of information disseminated in the media and on social networks, as well as an analysis of the relevant normative legal acts.

Within the framework of the activities of the Monitoring Group, continuous analysis of normative legal acts was carried out from the perspective of ensuring the right to equality, and proposals and recommendations were developed with regard to inconsistencies that may give rise to instances of discrimination.

Among these proposals were, inter alia, amendments aimed at ensuring the timely realization of the right to education without discrimination and, consequently, the effective protection of the right to equality. In particular, it was proposed to introduce a relevant amendment to Article 21 (Deferral of conscription for the continuation of education) of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Military Duty and Military Service” to extend the right to deferral of conscription to persons pursuing education in part-time (extramural) form.

Furthermore, it was recommended to amend Article 23 of the Disciplinary Statute of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as the provision excluding the application of certain incentive measures specified in Article 22, namely subparagraphs “e” (awarding the military rank of senior soldier (senior sailor)), “ə” (awarding contract-based sergeants a rank one level higher than that prescribed for their position), and “i” (granting short-term leave of up to 10 days to conscripted soldiers, sailors and sergeants, excluding cadets of higher military schools, without taking into account travel time) to female military personnel holding the ranks of soldier, sailor and sergeant creates a contradiction from the standpoint of ensuring the right to equality. Accordingly, it was proposed to eliminate these exceptions through appropriate amendments to the Statute.

In addition, in order to ensure the right to equality and eliminate discriminatory practices, it was proposed to amend Article 233 (Interrogation of the accused person) of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan so as to extend the provision requiring that interrogation be conducted only during daytime hours (except in urgent cases) to other participants in criminal proceedings.

CHAPTER II

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Ombudsman attached special importance to strengthening international cooperation in the field of promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. During the reported year, the development of relations with international organizations, active involvement in global and regional networks, as well as the expansion of cooperation with ombudsmen and national human rights institutions of various countries have served to implementation of positive practices at the national level, to global recognition of and support the country's experience and initiatives in the field of human rights and freedoms protection, and thereby to strengthening the international reputation of our country.

The measures realized in this direction, active participation in various international forums, conferences, and working groups, have enabled favorable conditions for strengthening continuous dialogue and relations with international partners, establishing new cooperation platforms, and deepening mutual exchange of experience with partner countries, as well as for ombudsmen institutions and NHRIs of foreign countries to benefit from the positive experience of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman.

- *Cooperation with international organizations.*
Cooperation with the United Nations (UN).

The cooperation of the Ombudsman with the UN serves to ensure the effective implementation of international legal norms and universal standards in the national legal system in the field of human rights protection and promotion. This cooperation is carried out through the Ombudsman institution's interaction with relevant UN bodies, treaty mechanisms, and special procedures. It also contributes to the monitoring of the implementation of obligations following from international human rights instruments, as well as the creating legal and institutional reforms.

A round table was held on the topic of "Strengthening cooperation towards the preparation of a National Action Plan in the field of business and human rights" at the initiative of the Ombudsman being jointly organized with the UN Office in Azerbaijan. The representatives of relevant government agencies, business entities, and civil society institutions took participation at the event.

The round table provided information on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (BHR), international experience, as well as the activities carried out by the Ombudsman in this field. Participants' suggestions and recommendations on the preparation of a National Action Plan in the field of BHR were listened to, and a broad exchange of views was held.

An event dedicated to December 10 - International Human Rights Day was organized jointly by the Ombudsman and the UN Mission in Azerbaijan. During the event there was provided the information on the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in terms of the development, promotion, and protection of human rights and freedoms, as well as on the complex reforms implemented in our country in this direction. The restoration of the right of our former internally displaced persons to return to their native lands, as well as other rights and freedoms that had been violated for many years were highlighted as well. Later, video messages from the UN Secretary-General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights dedicated to International Human Rights Day were listened to.

After the official part of the event, a special "Fibonacci" intellectual game dedicated to International Human Rights Day was organized.

During the event, the winners of the journalistic writing and children's drawing competitions dedicated to the topics "Constitution and Sovereignty through the Eyes of the Media" and "Constitution and Sovereignty through the Eyes of Children", traditionally announced by the Ombudsman on the occasion of December 10 - International Human Rights Day, were also awarded.

During the year, inquiries regarding human rights and freedoms received from the UN were also responded to.

Thus, the information was developed on the relevant paragraphs of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Periodic State Reports of the Republic of Azerbaijan submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and information was presented on the status of implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in the country, as well as on the measures and awareness-raising activities carried out by the Ombudsman in this field.

A questionnaire sent for the preparation of the UN Secretary-General's report for 2025 regarding UN GA resolution A/RES/79/161 "Global call for concrete action to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" has been responded to.

Following the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 54/21, a response document was developed and submitted, providing the answers to the questions raised in the survey on the topic of "The right to privacy in the digital age" and reflecting information on the measures taken by the Ombudsman in this field.

Following the UN HRC Resolution 55/8, a request addressed to the Ombudsman regarding the situation regarding ensuring accessibility for PWDs has been responded to.

The information on the work carried out by the Ombudsman Institution with regard to the implementation of obligations following from the ICCPR, resolutions of the UN HRC on technical cooperation and capacity building, as well as the implementation status of recommendations adopted in relation to our country within the framework of the UN human rights treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the HRC has been summarized and submitted properly.

In addition, relevant information was prepared and submitted as appropriate on the requests sent to national human rights institutions on the protection of children's rights and the prevention of early and forced marriages within the framework the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and relevant resolutions of the UN HRC.

- *Cooperation within the framework of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)*

A delegation led by the Ombudsman participated in the Annual Meeting of GANHRI, which operates under the auspices of the UN and unites NHRIs from different countries of the world, held in Geneva, Switzerland. At the event, heads of NHRIs and international experts from various countries of the world discussed current issues in the field of human rights protection, especially the rights of women and girls, gender equality promotion and the protection of PWDs' rights, as well as prospects for future cooperation in this field.

During her speech at the thematic session on "Women's and Girls' Rights: Promoting Gender Equality and the Role of National Human Rights Institutions", the Ombudsman provided information on measures undertaken to protect women's rights, ensure gender equality, expand social and psychological support services for victims of violence, as well as increase women's economic opportunities.

The statement was adopted at the end of the meeting and it identified strengthening the efforts of NHRIs to protect the rights of women and girls, prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality, in particular, early intervention in combating gender-based violence and expanding victims' access to psychosocial services as key objectives. The document also highlights the importance of forming more effective international cooperation mechanisms to protect the PWDs' rights, increasing the opportunities for independent living and inclusive employment of these persons, and implementing stimulating mechanisms for employers.

- *Cooperation within the framework of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA)*

AOA is an independent organization that aims to strengthen cooperation and exchange of experiences among ombuds institutions operating in the Asian region, and to promote the protection of human rights

and the principles of good governance. The Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, as a member and Vice-President of the AOA, actively participates in the organization's activities and makes a significant contribution to the development of cooperation between member institutions through webinars, trainings, and joint projects held within the Association.

The Ombudsman participated in the 26th Board of Directors Meeting and the 18th General Assembly Meeting of the Asian Ombudsman Association held in Nanjing, People's Republic of China. During the meetings, the report on the Association's activities for 2024-2025, including the financial review, was approved, and the Action Plan for 2025-2026 was discussed.

It should be especially noted that during the event, the AOA Executive Secretary drew attention to the active activities of the Azerbaijan Ombudsman Institution, emphasizing that the training and webinars organized by it have made a special contribution to the exchange of experience among member institutions, as well as to the development of their skills in specific areas such as ensuring the right to access information, protecting the rights of PWDs, BHR, corporate social responsibility, and ensuring equal rights.

In her speech during the event, the Azerbaijan Ombudsman has highlighted the importance of the AOA as a platform for the protection and promotion of human rights in the region, and stated that she would continue to actively participate in the activities carried out within the organization in the future. The Ombudsman has also noted the importance of joint initiatives and activities for the exchange of best practices, especially in the areas of protecting PWDs' rights, preventing discrimination, and combating corruption.

The Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, together with the AOA, held an international webinar on the topic "Protecting the rights of PWDs in the context of corporate responsibility: the role of ombudsman institutions" dedicated to December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities. More than 100 participants representing member institutions of the Association joined the webinar and learned about the positive experience of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the relevant field.

In her speech, the Ombudsman highlighted the work carried out with the aim to promote corporate social responsibility and the importance of ensuring that PWDs have equal rights and opportunities in all areas of society. The Ombudsman also brought to the attention of the webinar participants the information about the activities carried out to monitor the CRPD implementation within the framework of her independent monitoring function, including information about the monitoring conducted in various institutions. At the event, Ombudsman representatives made presentations on the topic and provided information on the work done in the BHR field.

- *Cooperation within the framework of the Association of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions of Turkic States (TURKOMB)*

TURKOMB is an important cooperation platform that brings together the Ombudsmen and NHRIs of Turkic-speaking countries. This association promotes mutual exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of human rights protection and supports member institutions in the field of increasing institutional capacity. Additionally, the association creates conditions for the approximation of regulatory and legal approaches, shaping general standards, and demonstrating common positions on international platforms.

The Ombudsman participated in the next online meeting of TÜRKOMB, held with the participation of heads and representatives of Ombuds and national human rights institutions of Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other member states, and exchanged views on the Association's priority areas of activity.

In the course of the meeting, the Ombudsman has emphasized the role that TÜRKOMB played an effective platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of human rights, noting that since the Association began its activities, international conferences and thematic training organized by the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Institution within the framework of TÜRKOMB had made a significant contribution to strengthening cooperation and have created broad opportunities for useful discussions on topics such as the right to access information, BHR.

The Ombudsman has highlighted the importance of continuing regular training and educational activities to strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experience among TÜRKOMB member institutions.

- *Cooperation with the Association of Ombudsmen of the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OICOA)*

The cooperation with the OIC, where the Azerbaijani Ombudsman is represented on the Board, has been continued.

The Ombudsman participated with a speech in the 12th Session of the OIC Board of Directors and General Assembly of the OIC, the 4th Session, held in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In her speech, she touched upon issues such as strengthening mutual cooperation, promoting joint initiatives in the protection of human rights, and deepening the exchange of experience and information between member institutions, noting that these experiences have made a significant contribution to the improvement of national legislation and state programs, as well as to the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including PWDs.

The Ombudsman also highlighted the issue of forced migration as one of the important problems of the modern era, bringing to the attention of participants that, as a result of the policy of ethnic cleansing, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forcibly expelled from their native lands and became refugees and IDPs, as a result, their fundamental rights and freedoms were grossly violated. She also provided information on the measures taken to protect the rights of these individuals and ensure their return to their native lands. The Ombudsman has also drawn attention to the mine problem, noting that mines buried in the liberated territories during occupation have caused people to lose their lives and health, that accurate information on mine maps has not been provided to this day, and that all of this creates serious threats and restrictions for former IDPs to return to their native lands and live safely.

In addition, the Ombudsman institution is represented in the Subcommittee on Women's Rights, established as a special platform under the OICOA in the field of protection and promotion of women's rights.

At the first meeting of the Subcommittee held online, which was also attended by representatives of the Ombudsman institutions of Turkey, Pakistan, Bahrain, Togo, and Benin, a representative of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman spoke and provided information on the Ombudsman's activities in the field of women's rights protection, including the function of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism, the experience and effectiveness of the implementation of this mechanism, and emphasized the importance of international cooperation, exchange of experience, and joint initiatives within the framework of the Subcommittee.

- *Cooperation with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)*

Cooperation with the ENNHRI has been of great importance in terms of expanding the exchange of experience and information, strengthening institutional capacity, and promoting international human rights standards.

The Ombudsman participated in the General Assembly of the ENNHRI held in Geneva, Switzerland. During the meeting, the institutional governance of the Network, and future priorities for action were discussed.

As a continuation of thematic cooperation, representatives of the Ombudsman participated in the meeting of the Working Group on the CRPD of the ENNHRI, organized in Berlin, Germany. The event included a broad exchange of views on the implementation of the CRPD, work done at the national level, current challenges, as well as the social, humanitarian and mental health aspects of disability issues. The activities of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in this field were also highlighted in joint bulletins reflecting the activities of the Working Group, posted on the institution's official website.

In addition, the WG responded to a survey to the Ombudsman regarding an independent monitoring mechanism.

The Ombudsman also contributed to the process of preparing a regional report on the Rule of Law, coordinated by the ENNHRI, which reflects the monitoring and evaluation activities of NHRIs across Europe in the field of the Rule of Law.

It should be noted that ENNHRI has developed and published a document on the activities of member institutions, including the Azerbaijani Ombudsman, for 2025, in accordance with the recommendations of the COE Committee of Ministers on national human rights institutions (Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the development and strengthening of effective, pluralist and independent NHRIs).

Within the framework of ENNHRI, documents received from other member national human rights institutions, including the Portuguese national human rights institution's inquiry on legal education practices, were responded to, and mutual experience was exchanged.

Alongside the abovementioned, the representative of the Ombudsman participated in the ENNHRI General Assembly and the Panel Session on Strategic Cooperation held in Brussels, Kingdom of Belgium, in November 2025. As a result of the event, the Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 and the Action Plan for 2026 were adopted, aimed at strengthening the role of national human rights institutions in Europe.

- *Cooperation with the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)*

The Ombudsman institution has further expanded international cooperation in the field of children's rights protection.

Representatives of the Ombudsman participated in the ENOC General Assembly 29th Annual Conference and of ENOC entitled "Protecting and Promoting Children's Right to Physical Health", where contemporary challenges related to the health and well-being of children were discussed. Within the framework of the conference, information on the work of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the field of child rights protection, improvement of legislation, and national experience in the establishment and operation of the Ombudsman's independent monitoring mechanism were brought to the attention of the event participants.

As a result of the aforementioned institutional and normative changes, the compliance of the activities of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Institution with the criteria reflected in Article 4 of the ENOC Charter was determined, and the institution was accepted from associate membership to full membership by a majority vote of member institutions at the 29th General Assembly of ENOC. This important decision enabled the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Institution to gain the right to directly participate and vote in the preparation of decisions, statements and recommendations adopted at the European level on children's rights. This, in turn, will serve to more effectively protect children's rights at the international level, further strengthen cooperation relations, and further strengthen the position of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the field of children's rights protection.

- *Cooperation within the framework of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC)*

As is known, the Azerbaijan Ombudsman Institution has become a full member of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) since 2023, which has a great influence in the field of ensuring the right to information and brings together information ombudsmen, as well as ombudsmen operating in other fields and other institutions, in order to protect and promote the right to access public information.

Speaking at the ICIC 16th International Conference held in Berlin (ICIC 2025), the Ombudsman provided participants with extensive information on the measures taken to protect and promote the right to access information, including the structural unit established in this area within the Ombudsman's Office, the investigation of appeals, and legal awareness activities.

The visit also created wide opportunities for meetings, mutual cooperation, and exchange of experiences with heads of NHRIs and information commissioners from various countries.

Cooperation with ombudsmen and NHRIs of foreign countries.

Following the MoU signed between the Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (TIHEK), joint activities continued to further widen mutual cooperation and effectively organize the exchange of experience in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms.

Within the framework of this cooperation, a delegation led by the Ombudsman visited the city of Gaziantep, Türkiye, met with the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality, the Governor of the city, and the Prosecutor General of Gaziantep, and visited the open-type penitentiary institution and the temporary detention facilities of the Regional Police Department.

The long-standing cooperative relations with ombudsmen and NHRIs of foreign countries have been further expanded. In this context, work continued throughout the year to further expand the existing cooperation between the Ombudsman and the newly elected Chief Ombudsman of the Republic of Türkiye and the new leadership of TIHEK. Meetings were held with the heads of both organizations who paid visits to Azerbaijan, and activities carried out in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms, joint projects, and future cooperation opportunities were the topic of discussions.

In 2025, an MoU was signed between the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan and the Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia to strengthen bilateral cooperation. The Memorandum envisages the exchange of experience and information in the field of human rights, strengthening institutional cooperation, implementing awareness-raising activities, and organizing joint projects.

During the bilateral meeting between the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine at the premises of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Institution, along with other topics related to mutual cooperation, humanitarian issues, including work carried out to protect the rights of refugees and IDPs, were discussed. It was noted that this problem is also relevant in Azerbaijan, as one of the countries suffering from war for a long time.

In order to improve activities in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms and exchange positive experiences, a group of staff members of the Ombudsman's Office participated in the training on the topic "Experiences in preventing discrimination from the perspective of the Ombudsman institutions of Montenegro and Azerbaijan" held in Budva, Montenegro. This was significant in terms of deepening cooperation between the Ombudsman institutions of both countries and strengthening institutional capacities in the field of human rights protection.

Within the framework of the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty" and June 18 - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan held an International Symposium on "Strengthening the Rule of Law: The Role of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions". The aim of the event was to improve the activities of ombudsmen and NHRIs in strengthening the Rule of Law and to discuss international experience in this area.

The symposium was attended by heads and representatives of ombudsmen and NHRIs from more than 15 countries, high-ranked officials of state bodies, deputies of the Parliament, representatives of international organizations, and CSOs.

At the opening of the Symposium, an address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, was delivered to the participants of the event. It was noted in the address that the Symposium assumed special importance as it coincided with the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the 5th anniversary of our glorious victory in the Patriotic War, and Human Rights Day, and that it made a significant contribution to the promotion and promotion of the values of independence and sovereignty, democratic principles, the Rule of Law, and human rights. It was also emphasized in the appeal the importance of strengthening the protection of human rights against the

backdrop of contemporary global challenges, as well as the significance of reforms carried out to improve the activities of the Ombudsman in line with international standards. Attention was also drawn to the rights of Azerbaijanis who were forcibly expelled from Western Azerbaijan and subjected to ethnic cleansing, and the need to ensure their peaceful and safe return to their historical homeland.

In her opening speech, the Ombudsman expressed her gratitude for the President's address to the Symposium participants and emphasized that the event would be useful in terms of discussing topical issues related to human rights protection and assessing the prospects for future cooperation.

Noting that globalization, armed conflicts, and other international processes in the modern era necessitate strengthening cooperation in the human rights field, the Ombudsman drew attention to the important role played by the ombuds institutions and NHRIs in ensuring the Rule of Law, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations. She also noted that improving domestic legislation in line with modern challenges, effectively organizing control over the implementation of normative legal acts, and the cooperation of these institutions with judicial bodies make a significant contribution to ensuring the Rule of Law, and spoke about the positive experience gained in this field.

The Chairman of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the First Deputy Chairman of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan delivered speeches at the Opening Session of the Symposium, and video addresses by the Chairmen of GANHRI and ENNHRI were listened to.

Within the framework of the Symposium, panel sessions were organized on the topics of "The role of the Ombudsman and NHRIs in ensuring constitutional rights", "Ensuring equal rights for everyone: positive experiences and challenges", and "Protecting the rights of refugees and strengthening international cooperation".

In the course of the event, the importance of strengthening cooperation in the human rights field in the context of modern globalization, armed conflicts, and other new challenges has been emphasized, and the discussion have been held on the role of NHRIs as guarantors of the Rule of Law, especially in conflict and post-conflict periods.

In the end, the Declaration of the International Symposium of Ombudsmen was adopted. The Declaration highlighted priority areas such as strengthening the activities of ombudsmen and NHRIs in protecting human rights and freedoms and ensuring the Rule of Law, increasing joint efforts to address modern challenges, including artificial intelligence (AI), armed conflicts, and risks related to the protection of vulnerable groups, and expanding international cooperation and exchange of experience, as well as legal awareness-raising activities.

On the second day of the Symposium, the participants visited the Guba district, where they got acquainted with the "ASAN Service" center, visited the Guba Genocide Memorial Complex and the mass grave in the area, and received information about the crimes against peace and humanity committed there.

Participation in other international conferences and events.

The Ombudsman actively participated in international conferences and various events held inside and outside the country within the framework of its activities in the field of international cooperation. These platforms have created a favorable opportunity for studying advanced practices in the field of human rights and freedoms protection, promoting the Azerbaijani experience at the international level, establishing effective cooperative relations, and monitoring modern trends.

The recent rapid development of information technologies and the penetration of AI into all areas of life both create new opportunities in the field of human rights protection and necessitate the application of modern approaches in the relevant field. Ombuds and national human rights institutions play an important role in this process, performing important functions in protecting human rights, minimizing risks, eliminating violations, and promoting responsible governance when applying AI.

In this context, the Ombudsman participated in the international conference on “Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights: Opportunities, Risks and a Vision for a Better Future” held in Qatar. The event was attended by leaders and representatives of various international organizations, ombudsmen and NHRIs of foreign countries, artificial intelligence experts, and legal scholars.

In her speech, the Ombudsman has provided information on the measures taken in our country in the field of development of digital governance and AI application, including the “Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2025-2028”. The Ombudsman has emphasized the importance of implementing preventive technical solutions to prevent AI-related bias and discrimination in decisions, conducting training for target groups within the framework of cooperation between state bodies, CSOs, and the private sector, and expanding re-education opportunities related to the AI application.

The Ombudsman has also highlighted the role of NHRIs in monitoring the AI impact on human rights, investigating complaints, organizing awareness-raising activities, improving legislation, and analyzing the process of implementing state programs in this direction.

Within the framework of the conference, the Ombudsman met with the Chairman of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) of the State of Qatar, the President of the European Ombudsman Institute, the heads of the NHRIs of Egypt and Bulgaria, and the heads of government agencies of Qatar to exchange views on current challenges and prospects for future cooperation.

The Ombudsman has participated in the international conference “Supporting Good Governance in Complex Times: The Role of the Ombudsman” held in Malta. In her speech, she emphasized the importance of enhancement of the management ethics and good governance principles in strengthening public trust, and spoke about the role of ombudsmen and NHRIs in this field. As well as she highlighted the importance of the activities of these institutions, especially in improving legislation, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of state programs, and increasing public awareness.

Within the frames of the visit, the President of the Republic of Malta, Mrs. Myriam Spiteri Debono, received the Azerbaijani Ombudsman and other conference participants. The Ombudsman also held meetings with other officials who participated in the conference.

The Ombudsman delivered a speech at the international scientific conference dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Ombudsman Institution in the Republic of Serbia. In her speech, the Ombudsman has highlighted the importance of cooperation with international organizations, ombudsmen, and NHRIs in the effective provision of human rights and freedoms, in improving their activities, and has also emphasized the close relations between the Ombudsmen institutions of Azerbaijan and Serbia, noting that the MoU signed between the two institutions serves to further strengthen existing cooperation.

The Ombudsman participated in the United Nations Forum On Business and Human Rights held in Geneva, Switzerland, and provided detailed information on the measures taken in our country to support business development and entrepreneurship, as well as the work done in the BHR field. She also spoke about the importance of supporting responsible business activities in the liberated territories and the demining of our lands in order to restore socio-economic life.

Within the framework of the Forum, the Ombudsman has met with the Chair of the UN Business and Human Rights Working Group, informed on the national assessment document prepared by the Ombudsman Institution in the field of business and human rights in Azerbaijan, and views were exchanged on the prospects for future cooperation.

The Ombudsman participated in the International Summit of Ombudsmen, dedicated to December 10 - International Human Rights Day, in Bratislava, the Slovak Republic. At an international event organized with the aim of exchanging positive experiences gained within the framework of the NPM activities, the Ombudsman emphasized the importance of the activities of NHRIs in the field of protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms, and drew attention to the importance of international cooperation in this

direction. She also provided detailed information on the activities of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman within the framework of the NPM mandate, and pointed out that this mandate has been slightly expanded as a result of the amendments made to the Constitutional Law. At the end of the event, the Bratislava Declaration was adopted on the results of the Summit.

As part of the visit, the Ombudsman also participated in a meeting held at the Committee for European Affairs of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

The Head of the Ombudsman's Office participated in the international conference on the topic "Clean, healthy and sustainable environment - a guarantee of ensuring human rights" dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. During his speech at the event, he spoke about the importance of the existing cooperative relations between the two institutions, and noted that COP29, hosted by our country, concluded with successful results and important decisions were made in the field of combating climate change, as well as that the International Baku Forum of Ombudsman was held on the eve of COP29 at the initiative of the Ombudsman, as well as that interactive discussions were organized during COP29.

An international seminar on the topic "Towards a Mine-Free World - the Example of Azerbaijan" was held in the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, jointly organized by the Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) and the Embassy of Azerbaijan in this country. Speaking at the event in an online format on the topic of "The Impact of Landmines on Human Rights", the Head of the Ombudsman's Office drew attention to the requirements of international legal norms in this field, emphasizing that mines are one of the greatest threats to the civilian population not only during armed conflicts, but also in post-war periods, and that this threat directly affects people's physical and psychological health, rights to life, freedom, health, education, labor and other rights.

In addition, the event participants were informed about the consistent and systematic activities of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman to protect the rights of mine victims, provide them with social reintegration and medical and psychological support, and the human rights violations occurring as a result of Armenia's mine terrorism were brought to attention.

The Ombudsman's representative participated in the 3rd Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2025. During the event he has provided the information on the reforms implemented Azerbaijan to ensure the right to equality and eliminate discrimination, the expansion of the Ombudsman's powers in this area as a result of amendments to the Constitutional Law, the activities of the Monitoring Group for Ensuring the Right to Equality and Preventing Discrimination, composed within the framework of the newly established independent monitoring mechanism mandate, as well as the activities of the structural unit established to ensure the right to equality, he also brought to the attention of the event participants information about the awareness-raising activities carried out in the relevant field, the printed materials prepared, and the video clip.

The Head of the Ombudsman Office participated in the Asian Regional Meeting of the International Ombudsman Institute and the international conference on "Strengthening the Rule of Law through Ombudsman Institutions" held in Lahore, Pakistan. In his speech, he provided information on the role of NHRIs in ensuring the rule of law and protecting human rights, as well as Azerbaijan's positive experience and work carried out in this field.

Representatives of the Ombudsman participated in the "Training on Data Protection Practices" held in Zagreb, Croatia. During the training, Croatian experience in the field of personal data protection, digitalization, legal regulation of AI, and cybersecurity was presented, and mechanisms for reviewing and investigating complaints in this area were discussed. Within the framework of the event, expert sessions of the Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency were organized, extensive information was provided on the Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (108+ Convention), and the Agency's powers and the work done to harmonize national legislation with that Convention were presented in detail.

Representatives of the Ombudsman provided information and held discussions on the activities of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the field of human rights protection and positive experiences at the Annual Seminar with Equality Bodies of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) held in Strasbourg, France.

Representatives of the Ombudsman, who participated in the 116th Session of the UN CERD, made speeches on the topic, provided information on the work done by the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the implementation of the Convention, and brought to attention proposals for future cooperation.

CHAPTER III

LEGAL EDUCATION, SCIENTIFIC-ANALYTICAL ACTIVITIES AND COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Human rights education. Improvement of legal thinking and legal culture in society by raising the level of awareness of the population on human rights and freedoms is one of the main directions of the Ombudsman's activity.

Systematic measures realized in this field enable opportunities for all members of society, especially vulnerable population groups, to recognize and defend their rights and freedoms, and to effectively use existing legal mechanisms. At the same time, awareness-raising activities significantly contribute to strengthening the principle of respect for human rights in state bodies, municipalities and other stakeholders, strengthening democratic governance, and ensuring the Rule of Law.

Considering the obligations arising from international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party, the UN SDGs, as well as relevant state programs, strategies, national action plans, concepts, and other relevant documents, legal awareness activities organized and realized by the Ombudsman, covering various target groups, have gained significant importance in this context.

Within the framework of educational activities, attention was paid to preserving national memory, keeping historical events alive in the public consciousness, and conveying the truths of Azerbaijan to the world community.

Along with tragic dates such as the 35th anniversary of the January 20 Tragedy, the 33rd anniversary of the Khojaly Genocide, the 107th anniversary of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis, the 5th anniversary of September 27 - Remembrance Day, traditional commemorative and awareness-raising events were held by the Ombudsman's Office and regional centers on May 10 - 102nd anniversary of the birth of National Leader Heydar Aliyev, May 28 - Independence Day, June 1 - International Children's Day, June 18 - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan, September 20 - State Sovereignty Day, October 18 - Restoration of Independence Day, November 12 - Constitution Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan, November 20 - Universal Children's Day, December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 10 - International Human Rights Day and other significant dates.

Internationally significant awareness-raising initiatives occupied special space in the Ombudsman's activities, and the measures realized in this direction have served to expand the exchange of advanced institutional experience in the field of human rights protection, as well as to promote Azerbaijani experience internationally and deepen partnership relations.

In order to contribute to the development of legal thinking and legal culture, staff members of the Ombudsman's Office and regional centers participated as experts, trainers, and speakers in events organized by various organizations and dedicated to human rights topics, assuming high importance.

An international conference on the topic of "Constitutional Basis and Historical Aspects of the Right to National Identity" was organized jointly by the Ombudsman, the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the International Center for Ottoman Studies. At the conference, the Ombudsman emphasized exposure of our people to ethnic cleansing, genocide, and occupations throughout the history, the importance of the right to national identity in terms of ensuring human rights, the fact that Azerbaijanis were the target of discrimination and violence on ethnic grounds at various times in the 20th century, as well as the gross violation of the rights of more than 250,000 Azerbaijanis deported from the territory of Armenia, and also noted that the event played an important role in conveying information to the general public about the protection of national identity and the restoration of rights.

A scientific-practical conference on the topic “Constitution and Sovereignty - Important Factors of the Rule of Law State” dedicated to the 102nd anniversary of the birth of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev was held by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Ombudsman delivered a speech on the topic “The Importance of the Ombudsman’s Cooperation with the Constitutional Court in the Protection of Human Rights in the Independent and Sovereign State of Azerbaijan”. In her speech, the Ombudsman has emphasized the crucial role of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan in shaping a solid legal basis for building a democratic, legal and secular state, making a significant contribution to the sustainable development of the state; the cooperation of the Ombudsman Institution with the Constitutional Court assuming particular importance in terms of effectively ensuring human rights and freedoms, protecting the Rule of Law and increasing the effectiveness of legal protection mechanisms. This event was an important input to strengthening cooperation with the Constitutional Court, enhancing functional coordination between state bodies, and determining future perspectives for action.

The Ombudsman delivered a speech at the conference on “The Impact of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence on Workplaces” organized by the MLSPP, the Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASK), dedicated to April 28 - World Labor Day, as well as the 120th anniversary of the first collective agreement. The Ombudsman emphasized the importance of measures taken in the field of digital governance and the application of AI, including the “Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2025-2028”. She has also highlighted the priority of protecting workers’ rights and ensuring safe and healthy working conditions in the context of digital transformation, the importance of training and retraining, the need to monitor the AI impact on human rights, and the need to improve legislation, and noted that strengthening mutual cooperation and social partnership mechanisms play an important role in this process.

Awareness-raising activities were continued with the aim to inform the public about the activities of the Ombudsman’s Independent Monitoring Mechanism, including its activities to ensure the right to equality and prevent discrimination, as well as to improve the activities of institutions in this area.

An educational event on the topic of “Ensuring, Promoting the Right to Equality and Preventing Discrimination” was organized at the Ombudsman’s Office with the participation of local executive authorities in Baku, NGOs, and other relevant institutions. At the event, participants were provided with comprehensive information about the Ombudsman’s mandate in the field of ensuring the right to equality and preventing discrimination, the activities of the relevant structural unit and Monitoring Group established for this purpose in the Ombudsman’s Office, the principles of the right to equality, legislation and related implementation mechanisms, and an educational video clip prepared on the topic of “Ensuring the Right to Equality” at the initiative of the Ombudsman was displayed.

Training on “Legal foundations of gender equality in the labor field and sustainable development” was organized within the framework of advanced training and retraining courses at the Academy of Labor and Social Relations of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Azerbaijan. The representative of the Ombudsman’s Office, delivering a speech at the event, informed the participants about the activities of the Ombudsman in the protection of women’s rights, ensuring gender equality, preventing gender-based and domestic violence, combating discrimination, and other relevant areas, and presented the institution’s legal educational publications to the participants.

Awareness-raising activities have also continued in the field of ensuring the right to access information, which is one of the important areas of the Ombudsman’s activities.

On the eve of September 28 - International Day for Universal Access to Information, the Azerbaijani Ombudsman supported the promotion of the right to information at the global level by participating in the “Your Information, Your Right” (Tu Info, Tu Derecho) campaign, which brought together all countries and addressed important challenges, the information on the activities and work of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the relevant field is reflected in the Special Issue Newsletter prepared by ICIC and posted on the institution’s official website.

Taking into account the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the 150th anniversary of the Azerbaijani Press, on the eve of the International Day for Universal Access to Information, a new educational booklet on the right to access information for media entities and journalists, entitled “Media entities and journalists’ right to access information” was prepared on the initiative of the Ombudsman. The booklet contains information on the right to access information, the responsibilities of information holders, information requests, deadlines for their implementation and reasons for refusal, the specifics of the Ombudsman's consideration of complaints regarding violations of the right to access information, and the power to draw up protocols regarding violations.

Besides this, in order to promote the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Access to Information” and increase the level of theoretical knowledge and awareness in this area, a video clip on the right to access information was prepared by the Ombudsman’s Office, widely distributed and demonstrated during awareness-raising events.

At the Ombudsman’s initiative, a series of training on the topic “Protection of the right to information” was conducted by the staff members of the Office for heads of departments and divisions, heads of regional offices and other officials of the DOST Agency, the State Medical-Social Expertise and Rehabilitation Agency under the MLSPP, as well as the State Labor Inspection Service under the MLSPP.

During the series of training comprehensive information has been provided on the essence of the right to access information in the contemporary era and the requirements of international and domestic legislation in this field, the activities of the Ombudsman in the field of protection of the right to access information, as well as the duties of state bodies and other information owners in the relevant area, as well as interactive discussions were conducted, and educational printed materials were presented to the participants.

It should be noted that at the II Forum on “Public Processes in the Media Sphere” organized by the Media Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ombudsman delivered a speech on the topic of “Media and Human Rights”, highlighting the role of media entities in legal education and the formation of public opinion, the importance of regulating the risks arising in the information environment in accordance with legal and ethical principles against the backdrop of the rapid development of digital technologies, as well as the importance of cooperation with the media.

Measures to promote the NPM function occupy a special place in the Ombudsman’s activities in the field of awareness-raising.

The Ombudsman organized a training on the topic “Fundamental guarantees of persons detained in police bodies - international standards” at the Police Academy of the MIA, where extensive information was provided, and presentations were made on the activities of the Ombudsman in the field of human rights protection.

A representative of the Ombudsman’s Office participated in a seminar on the topic “Fighting corruption. Protection of human rights in police activities, requirements of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and international regulatory legal acts in this field” held at the Police Academy of the MIA for the administration of district and city police departments and divisions. He provided detailed information on the Ombudsman’s activities in the field of promotion, protection and protection of human rights, as well as within the framework of the preventive mandate, cooperation relations at the national and international levels, as well as the work carried out within the framework of state programs on human rights and the fight against corruption.

During a wide-scaled event jointly organized by the Penitentiary Service of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Academy of Justice, attended by the administrative staff of penitentiary institutions, members of the Ombudsman's NPG have provided detailed information about the Ombudsman’s activities in protecting the rights of convicts, as well as the NPM and the Independent Monitoring mechanism.

In the next lecture on the topic “Activities of the Ombudsman as an NPM” held by the Ombudsman’s representative at the Academy of Justice for the middle administrative staff and newly recruited staff

members of the Penitentiary Service and Forensic Expertise Center of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, detailed information was provided on the Ombudsman's activities as a NPM under OPCAT, as well as on visits to institutions which individuals cannot leave of their own will, recommendations put forward, and the status of their implementation.

Delivering a speech at the Forum on the topic "Tax Service - 25: Sustainable Development and Effective Transformation", the Ombudsman informed on the continuation of cooperation with the State Tax Service under the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the direction of effective protection of taxpayers' rights, restoration of violated rights, increasing transparency in the tax field and protection of free entrepreneurship, work on the implementation of the UN "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights" and the preparation of a sectoral national action program, visits carried out within the framework of the NPM, investigation of custody conditions and appeals, as well as monitoring and improvement of regulatory legal acts.

A series of awareness-raising training were held for schoolchildren within the framework of the "Shine with Your Rights!" project, organized by the Ombudsman, the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan and its Center for Public Health and Reforms, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Social Services Agency under the MLSPP, the "Regional Development" Public Union and the Azerbaijan Cybersecurity Organizations Association, and implemented with the financial support of the "Nar Mobile" mobile operator. In the course of these trainings, comprehensive information was provided on the rights and responsibilities of children, the main provisions of the CRC, access to human rights mechanisms, as well as the legal consequences of violence and its forms, early marriage, forced labor, and other violations, as well as the activities of the Ombudsman in the field of child rights protection.

Representatives of the Ombudsman Office delivered a speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Debate Forum within the framework of the project "Protecting children from harmful and dangerous information in the digital society", organized by the "Regional Development" Public Union, supported by the "Nar Mobile" mobile operator, and held in partnership with the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "ADA" University and the Azerbaijan Cybersecurity Organizations Association. They informed about the Ombudsman's activities in the field of protecting child rights, protecting children in the digital environment, existing threats, methods of combating them, and legislation, and put forward recommendations to students and parents on ensuring the safety of children in the online environment.

During the educational event for students of a number of schools located in Alat settlement jointly organized by the Ombudsman and "Baku International Sea Port" LLC, participants were provided with extensive information about the essence, importance, development stages of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, human rights protection mechanisms, and the Ombudsman's activities in this area. At the end of the event, the students were presented with a book titled "The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Children" and a number of other printed materials.

On the eve of June 18 - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan, in our country, "Human Rights Month" has been traditionally declared from May 18 to June 18 in order to promote rights and freedoms, increase the legal knowledge of the public, discuss current challenges in the field of human rights, and publicize the activities carried out at the national level.

In this regard, an open appeal was addressed to relevant institutions and the general public, calling for active participation in the events held within the framework of the Month-long campaign, organizing human rights awareness-raising events and campaigns, increasing attention to the rights of vulnerable groups, developing educational materials, and providing wide coverage of the events through the media.

Within the framework of the "Human Rights Month", a series of awareness-raising events were held in various cities and regions of our country by the Ombudsman's Office and regional centers, as well as other state bodies, municipalities, science, education, culture, social service, healthcare and penitentiary

institutions, CSOs, and covered the promotion of the principles of the Rule of Law, legal responsibility, legal culture and inclusive society. During the implementation of awareness-raising activities, special attention was paid to ensuring the rights and interests of all groups of the population, especially socially vulnerable groups - families of martyrs, war veterans, PWDs, children, the elderly, refugees, former IDPs and migrants. During that period, legal educational materials were prepared and distributed among the population, events and social videos were covered through audiovisual, online media and television and radio channels, as well as in printed materials, and the activities carried out were shared on social media platforms with the hashtags #HumanRightsMonth and #HumanRightsMonth.

Within the framework of the month-long campaign, events were held at the initiative of the Ombudsman jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Energy, the State Border Service, the Naftalan City Executive Power, the Social Services Agency under the MLSPP, the Police Academy of the MIA, and the Azerbaijan University of Languages. During these events presentations, reports and speeches were made on such topics as “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms”, “The Ombudsman’s activities in the field of ensuring the right to access information”, “The Right to Equality and Prevention of Discrimination”, “International and National Legal Instruments on Human Rights”, “The Mandate and Activities of the Ombudsman”, “UN Human Rights Mechanisms and Humanitarian Law”, “Effective Use of Natural Resources and Social Welfare”, “Recognize Your Rights, Protect Your Rights”, “Guaranteeing the Constitution and Sovereignty”, “Protecting Children’s Rights and Preventing the Exploitation of Child Labor”, “Promoting Youth’s Knowledge of the Constitution and Sovereignty”, interactive discussions were held with the participants, and their questions were answered.

As one of the final events of the “Human Rights Month” announced across the country, the International Symposium of Ombudsmen was held on the initiative of the Ombudsman on the topic “Strengthening the Rule of Law: The Role of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions” dedicated to the “Year of Constitution and Sovereignty” and June 18 - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Symposium, being an important component of human rights awareness-raising activities, has also made a significant contribution to the exchange of positive experiences and strengthening national and international cooperation in the field of human rights protection. The address of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Symposium participants, as well as the Declaration adopted at the end, were of great importance in terms of strengthening the role and activities of the ombudsman and NHRIs, and determining future priorities for increasing international cooperation and joint efforts against the backdrop of contemporary challenges.

In the course of series of legal awareness events held across the country by the Ombudsman’s Office and regional centers, information was provided on “The Role of Religious and Spiritual Solidarity in Protecting Sovereignty”, “Protection of Constitutional Rights”, “Heydar Aliyev and Independent Azerbaijan”, “Constitutional Principles and the Fight against Corruption”, “Protection of the Rights of Migrants from Vulnerable Groups”, “Mental Health and Human Rights”, “Ensuring the Right of Citizens to Appeal”, “Protection of Children from Harmful Influences and Labor Rights”, “Education against Human Trafficking”, “Fight against Drug Addiction” and other relevant topics, and the participants’ questions were answered. The events were organized for staff members of state and public institutions, as well as for youth, vulnerable groups, children, and migrants.

It should be noted that, in addition to legal awareness events on “Human Rights Month” and “Children’s Rights Month”, as well as other significant international and local days, intellectual knowledge competitions and special seminars were held, and relevant educational materials were provided to the participants.

At the Round Table held within the framework of the project “Study of the problem of cluster munitions in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan” of the “Azerbaijan Campaign Against Mines” Public Union, the Ombudsman’s representative provided detailed information on the activities carried out by the Ombudsman to expose Armenia’s mine terrorism and war crimes before international and regional organizations, as well as to protect the rights of PWDs as a result of mine explosions that occurred in the zone of military operations.

A meeting was held at the initiative of the Ombudsman with the participation of the administrative teams of the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA), the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijan National Amputee Football Team, as well as team coaches and members. At the meeting, the Ombudsman provided information on the threats posed by landmines to human rights and freedoms, the activities carried out to protect the rights of landmine victims, their rehabilitation, and strengthen their social security, and stated that she pays attention to ensuring the PWDs' rights and freedoms. She also drew attention to the fact that the majority of amputee athletes participated in the First and Second Karabakh Wars, as well as those who lost their health as a result of the mine terrorism that continued in the post-conflict period, and emphasized that the activities of this team are a clear example of the unwavering will, love of life, and patriotism of Azerbaijani citizens.

A video clip, prepared at the initiative of the Ombudsman and dedicated to the protection of PWDs' rights, their integration into society, and the promotion of equal opportunities, was displayed at the meeting.

It should be noted that such events assume particular importance in terms of promoting PWDs' rights in society, their equal opportunities and social integration based on clear and real examples, drawing attention to the serious consequences of the mine threat on human rights, eliminating stereotypes through the life stories of amputee athletes, developing empathy and inclusive thinking, as well as raising legal culture by communicating the work and educational tools of the Ombudsman in the field of human rights protection to a wide audience.

The event titled "National Leader Heydar Aliyev is the author of the Constitution of independent Azerbaijan" was held at the initiative of the Ombudsman at the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical College under the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University within the framework of the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty". Delivering a speech at the event, the Ombudsman has emphasized that the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, prepared and adopted under the leadership of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev, defines the provision of human rights and freedoms as the supreme goal of the state. She also noted that as a result of the statehood strategy formulated by the National Leader and successfully continued by President Ilham Aliyev, the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity have been fully restored and significant achievements have been made in the field of ensuring human rights. The Ombudsman has also mentioned that within the framework of the "Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty", the Ombudsman Institution carried out legal awareness activities in the capital and regions, and that these activities served to increase the legal knowledge of students on the subject of the Constitution and sovereignty, and to develop legal thinking and legal culture. She also noted that the Ombudsman Institution provides continuous support to strengthen the legal knowledge of young people within the framework of cooperation with educational institutions.

At the event, a social video clip prepared at the initiative of the Ombudsman was displayed, questions of interest to the event participants were answered, as well as exhibitions titled "National Leader Heydar Aliyev is the author of the Constitution of independent Azerbaijan", "The Constitution is our Main Law", "Azerbaijan in historical sources", "Unspoken truths" and "Publications of the Ombudsman's Office" were organized.

Throughout the year, the Ombudsman continued to develop and disseminate educational materials on various areas of activity to promote human rights.

A video clip was prepared under the slogan "For an inclusive society where everyone has equal rights!", dedicated to December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities with the purpose to raise awareness about the activities of the Monitoring Group on Monitoring and Promoting the Implementation of the CRPD, established within the framework of the Ombudsman's IMM, as well as to emphasize the importance of promoting an inclusive society and the equal and full realization of PWDs' rights, as well as the removal of existing barriers.

The educational social video clip, prepared at the initiative of the Ombudsman to promote the right to equality and eliminate discrimination, emphasizes the importance of protecting the values of multiculturalism and multinationalism in our country, the fact that all individuals, including various vulnerable groups of the population, have the same rights and freedoms, and the inadmissibility of discrimination based on any grounds, and touches on issues of gender equality.

This should be mentioned to the point that a social video clip dedicated to ensuring the right to equality and eliminating discrimination, as well as other informational materials on human rights, were broadcast on television and radio channels, on monitors installed in Baku by the Intelligent Transport Management Center of the MIA, on billboards in open spaces of the State Advertising Agency, as well as at the Koroglu Transport Interchange Center (HUB) of the Azerbaijan Land Transport Agency and at bus stops.

In order to disseminate educational materials published in various languages at the initiative of the Ombudsman among a wide audience, these materials were presented to state institutions, libraries, educational, social service, penitentiary and correctional institutions, as well as to participants in meetings during the participation of the Ombudsman and her representatives in local and international events, through the Human Rights Library of the Ombudsman's Office.

During the year, special educational materials titled "National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture" (in Braille for the completely visually impaired), "10 Questions - 10 Answers", "Know your rights - Stand against discrimination!", "Media subjects and journalists' right to access information" and "The principle of prohibition of discrimination and the role of ombudsmen in the context of combating hate speech and xenophobia" were developed, published and made available to readers.

At the event on the theme "Directions of the Ombudsman's Activity: New Approaches and Perspectives Based on Human Rights" at the XI Baku International Book Fair, organized by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the "Baku Expo Center", presentations were made on the Ombudsman's activities in the field of legal education and increasing legal knowledge, as well as the right to access information, children's rights, PWDs rights, the right to equality, the functions of the NPM and IMM and other areas.

During the exhibition, 281 publications of the Ombudsman's Office, including books, booklets, leaflets, posters, and CDs in Azerbaijani, Russian, English, Ukrainian, and French, were presented for the attention of participants. These publications were met with great interest, and the stand was visited by hundreds of local and foreign participants. It should be noted that the manual for the visually impaired entitled "National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture", published at the initiative of the Ombudsman, was the only manual prepared in Braille at the 11th Baku International Book Fair. This attracted the great interest of visitors, as well as publishers, who expressed their willingness to join this initiative of the Ombudsman in order to support inclusive life in the future. At the same time, reports on human rights violations and hate crimes committed by Armenia during the thirty-year occupation of Azerbaijani lands, based on the results of fact-finding missions carried out by the Ombudsman during the Second Karabakh War and the post-war period, were also displayed at the exhibition.

In accordance with the calendar of significant and historical days, exhibitions titled "January 20", "Khojaly Tragedy", "March 31 - Day of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis", "June 15 - National Salvation Day", as well as "Publications of the Ombudsman's Office", "New Publications", "June 18 - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan", "September 20 - State Sovereignty Day", "September 27 - Remembrance Day", "November 8 - Victory Day" and "December 10 - International Human Rights Day" were organized in the Human Rights Library of the Ombudsman's Office.

At the same time, within the framework of the International Symposium of Ombudsmen on the theme "Strengthening the Rule of Law: The Role of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions" dedicated to the "Year of Constitution and Sovereignty" and June 18 - Human Rights Day in the Republic of Azerbaijan, a large exhibition consisting of three parts, enriched with new materials reflecting the topic of deportation, genocide and ethnic cleansing, entitled "Publications of the Ombudsman's Office", "Azerbaijan in Historical Sources", "The Constitution is our Main Law" and "Unsilenced Truths", was exhibited both at the venue of the Symposium and in the Human Rights Library of the Ombudsman's Office.

These exhibitions significantly contributed in delivering to wide auditorium, as well as to global community fundamental knowledge on human rights, independence, sovereignty, statehood and historical memory, in legal education of society and increasing citizens' objective knowledge of historical truths.

Involving students in internship programs and scientific research experience, as well as various programs and projects, assume great importance in terms of increasing their theoretical knowledge and practical skills, forming their professional habits, supporting their creative and innovative potential, and developing a sense of responsibility. Such experiences strengthen students' analytical thinking, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills, helping them to be better prepared for their future professional activities and increasing their social activism.

This also should be mentioned that a total of 109 students studying in relevant specialties at Azerbaijan University of Languages, Nakhchivan State University, Western Caspian University, Baku Eurasia University and Khazar University participated in interactive lectures, including master's students in Human Rights and Medical Law specializations of the Faculty of Law of Baku State University who completed research internships at the Ombudsman's Office, as well as students studying in the Law specialty, they performed practical work in structural units and had the opportunity to use the Ombudsman's Human Rights Library. Students who successfully completed the internship program were given relevant certificates on behalf of the Ombudsman.

In addition, within the framework of the volunteer program that continued throughout the year, 39 participants carried out practical activities in the structural units of the Ombudsman's Office for three months, closely familiarizing themselves with the daily work and human rights protection process. Volunteers who successfully completed the program were presented with a certificate or letter of recommendation in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Volunteer Activities".

Scientific and analytical activity. The Ombudsman's activities in the scientific and analytical field assume particular importance in terms of strengthening the institutional and legal foundations of mechanisms for the protection of human rights and freedoms. Scientific and methodological research carried out within the framework of this activity serves to identify existing functional and normative inconsistencies in the practice of law enforcement, to prepare substantiated proposals to eliminate them, and to ensure full compliance of legislation with international standards, thereby ensuring more efficient and effective realization of human rights and freedoms.

The Ombudsman's scientific and analytical activities also include a comprehensive analysis of new social, economic, and technological factors that affect the protection of human rights. This approach allows the Ombudsman to organize effective protection for resolving traditional legal problems, as well as to put forward initiatives to take adequate measures to address new challenges.

The IT rapid development necessitates the application of new approaches in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms. From this standpoint, it is extremely important to identify new priority areas in this field and ensure the continuity of measures to improve the regulatory and legal framework.

The need to develop and adopt the "State Program on Business and Human Rights" remains relevant considering modern international challenges and positive experiences of foreign countries, with the aim to ensure respect and observance of human rights and freedoms during the implementation of entrepreneurial activities, to ensure that legal protection tools are more accessible, to create conditions for more active participation of entrepreneurs in the socio-economic life of the country by promoting and implementing corporate social responsibility, and to achieve coordination of the activities of relevant institutions in this field.

Part II of Article 148 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan defines international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party as an integral part of the legislative system of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This approach once again emphasizes the importance of international legal norms in the shaping and improvement of domestic legislation.

From this standpoint, in order to further strengthen our country's international position in human rights and freedoms protection field and increase the effectiveness of measures taken in this direction, it is once again proposed to ratify the following international treaties:

- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. This document was adopted within the frames of the UNGA 61st Session and announced open for signing, ratification and adherence for member-states from February 6, 2007;

- Following articles of the Revised European Social Charter: Article 2 - on the right to just conditions of work; Article 3 - right to safe and healthy working conditions; Article 10 - the right to appropriate facilities for vocational training; Article 13 - right to social and medical assistance; Article 15 - the right of disabled persons (persons with disabilities) to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community; Article 17 - the right of children and young persons to appropriate social, legal and economic protection; Article 23 - the right of every elderly person to social protection; Article 30 - right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and Article 31 - the right to housing.

- The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure;

- The Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108+).

Besides these, it is considered appropriate for our country to join the Amman-Berlin Declaration on Global Disability Inclusion, which includes advanced measures aimed at strengthening the principles of inclusion, accessibility, equal opportunities and participation at the global level, in accordance with the requirements of the UN CRPD.

Following the mandate defined by the Article 1.8 of the Constitutional Law, the Ombudsman is closely involved in the process of improving regulatory and legal acts, providing opinions and suggestions on draft regulatory and legal acts submitted to her for approval, as well as makes proposals to the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan concerning the adoption, repeal, or amendment of laws.

As each year, in 2025 the opinions and suggestions of the Ombudsman with regard to the normative legal act drafts were taken in consideration as well.

Suggestions on the drafts of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the establishment of the "Law" information system and the regulation of a number of related issues" and the Regulation "On the "Law" information system", addressed to the Ombudsman by the public legal entity "Center for Legal Expertise and Legislative Initiatives", have been developed and submitted as appropriate.

The opinions and proposals prepared On the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan On Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Combating Human Trafficking" and the relevant draft decrees, as well as draft Decree On Amendments to the "List of Civil Servants Empowered to exercise Government Powers", at the same time, draft Resolutions on amendments to some decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan prepared in this regard have been sent to the relevant authorities, a number of projects were approved after review.

In addition to the above, in connection with the appeal addressed to the Ombudsman by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, opinions and suggestions have been developed and submitted as appropriate with regard to bringing in conformity of a number of normative legal acts with the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 256-VIIKQD dated September 30, 2025 "On Amendments to the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan".

The Ombudsman's opinions and suggestions on the draft "Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Children for 2026-2030", as well as the "National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2025-2030" and the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Approval of the Plan, submitted for consideration, were taken into account.

Suggestions on the Draft Council of Europe Strategy on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026-2030)" prepared by the Secretariat of the COE Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), which was received from the MFA of the Republic of Azerbaijan, have been prepared and sent to the relevant authorities.

Opinions and suggestions regarding the "Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2026-2030)" received from the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan were also developed and submitted as appropriate.

A package of suggestions has been prepared in response to the appeal from the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Ombudsman regarding the submission of proposals for the recommendation decision and report to be adopted at the Twelfth Meeting of the TURKPA Commission on Legal Affairs and International Relations to be held on the topic of "Ombudsman Institutions in the Member States of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic States".

It should be especially emphasized that the vast majority of the suggestions of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman were taken into account in the recommendations included in the Recommendation Resolution adopted by the Commission on improving the activities of the ombudsman institutions of the TURKPA member states.

As is known, within the framework of the powers established by Part 7 of Article 130 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Article 13.2.8 of the Constitutional Law and Article 32.5 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Constitutional Court", the Ombudsman enjoys the right to appeal to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan with a request, in accordance with the procedure established by law, against normative acts of legislative and executive bodies, municipal and judicial acts that violate human rights and freedoms.

The cooperation of the Ombudsman with the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan is of particular importance in terms of the effective provision of human rights and freedoms. This cooperation primarily strengthens the institutional protection of human rights. Thus, the Ombudsman systematically identifies legal problems based on incoming complaints and, if necessary, addresses inquiries to the Constitutional Court, and this enables taking preventive and effective measures to protect rights and freedoms.

On the other hand, this cooperation significantly contributes to a legal state building. Thus, the decisions adopted by the Constitutional Court not only resolve a specific legal dispute, but also serve to improve the normative framework, such as case law, and develop legal thinking, making legal mechanisms fairer and more transparent.

Thus, the cooperation between the Ombudsman institution and the Constitutional Court serves the goals of ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, improving legislation, preventing violations of human rights and freedoms, and increasing the effectiveness of legal protection mechanisms.

Throughout a year, three relevant court acts were adopted with regard to the questionnaires addressed by the Ombudsman to the Constitutional Court.

The Ombudsman's request to verify the compliance of paragraph 3.2.23 of the "Rules for the organization of education at the bachelor's and master's levels of higher education facilities, basic (base higher) medical education with the credit system" approved by the decision No. 348 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 24, 2013, of paragraph 3.2.24 of the "Rules for the organization of education with a credit system in secondary specialized educational institutions" approved by decision №354 dated December 26, 2013, as well as of paragraph 3.2.25 of the "Rules for the organization of higher technical vocational education in vocational education facilities with a credit system", approved by Decision No. 72 dated March 9, 2022, with the relevant parts of Articles 25, 41, 42, 71 and 149 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan was considered by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

According to the Ombudsman's conclusion in the request, the fact that paragraph 3.2.23 of the "Rules for the Organization of Education at Bachelor's and Master's Levels of Higher Education Institutions and Basic (Basic Higher) Medical Education with a Credit System" approved by the Decision №348 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 24, 2013, constitutes an exception only for athletes-students who are members of national teams approved by the Board of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan in sports is assessed as a violation of equality, education and other constitutional rights, it was emphasized that this provision should also apply to students who are unable to attend more than 25 percent of the allotted classroom hours for a subject in higher, secondary, and vocational education institutions due to illness, quarantine, or other valid reasons.

In the relevant Decision of the Plenum of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted based on the request, it was recommended to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan to improve the relevant rules to ensure the educational rights of students who do not attend more than 25% of the allotted lecture hours for a subject at the bachelor's and master's levels of higher education facilities, and secondary specialized and vocational education institutions for valid reasons.

Alongside with this, the Ombudsman's requests to verify the compliance of Article 455.0.3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the relevant parts of Articles 60, 71, 127, 130 and 149 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as of Parts 2 and 3 of Article 144 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the relevant parts of Articles 25, 37, 71, 149 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, were considered by the Chamber of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan and resolutions were adopted on their acceptance for the proceedings of the Plenum.

The Ombudsman's articles targeted at increasing public awareness in the field of human rights and freedoms protection, improving the activities of state bodies, promoting legality and transparency, identifying new directions for legal reforms based on modern challenges, as well as developing human rights protection mechanisms at both the domestic and international levels have been published.

Public relations and cooperation with civil society organizations. Throughout the year, fruitful cooperation with CSOs, including NGOs and various communities in the field of human rights protection, was continued, and various events were organized.

A series of training, seminars, and public discussions on human rights held with the participation of CSOs have played an important role in developing legal culture, as well as improving joint activities in the field of ensuring and protecting human rights and freedoms.

The Ombudsman continued its cooperation with the "Union of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities", "Disabled Women's Society" Public Union, "Silent Communication - Support and Development of Sign Language" Public Association, UNEC Inclusive Education Center, "Independent Living Center for Persons with Disabilities" Public Association, "For the sake of an Inclusive Society" Public Association, "Place of Hope Charity Society" Public Association, "Hopeful Future" Social Initiatives Public Union, "Zafar" Support for Martyrs' Families Public Union, Azerbaijan Autism Association, Baku Autism Sports and Life Club, Republican Association of Patients with Hemophilia, Azerbaijan Psychiatric Association, IDDO Mental Health Program, Psychology Scientific Research Institute, "Together and Healthy" Public Union, "Regional Development" Public Union, "Gender Hub Azerbaijan", "Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban Landmines" Public Union and other public organizations.

The Ombudsman conducted thematic discussions with CSOs representatives on the protection of personal data for parents and children, ways to use the Internet safely, ways to combat cyberbullying, digital security incidents, health, including mental health issues, protection of the rights of children with limited physical capacities and organization of their leisure time, protection of the rights of children in street environments, and other relevant topics.

For the effective cooperation with the Ombudsman, during the event dedicated to November 8 - Victory Day, the head of the "Zafar" Public Union for Support for Martyrs' Families was awarded the jubilee medal of the Republic of Azerbaijan "20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2002-2022)".

“Neftchi” Professional Football Club and “Umid Yeri” Children's Shelter, like many other public organizations, contributed to the “Children’s Rights Month-long Campaign” announced at the initiative of the Ombudsman and covering the dates of October 20 - November 20. This cooperation has not only supported the promotion of children's rights, but also served to ensure that these rights are kept in mind by everyone and ensured more effectively.

A Letter of Appreciation was presented to the Ombudsman for the support provided by the “Disabled Women’s Society” Public Union within the framework of the project “Improving access to public/state services for women and girls with disabilities in the cities of Baku, Ganja and Guba, Gusar, Khachmaz districts”, as well as for its efficient and professional activities.

The representative of the Ombudsman participated in the event where a video clip prepared by the aforementioned Public Union within the framework of the project “Life Stories of Refugee Women with Disabilities” was displayed, and provided participants with extensive information about the activities carried out by the Ombudsman to protect the rights of refugee and IDP women, including PWDs, who became refugees and IDPs as a result of Armenia’s military aggression against Azerbaijan.

NGO representatives also took participation in the event organized to educate the general public about the Ombudsman’s new competences in the field of ensuring the right to equality and eliminating discrimination, following the amendments made to the Constitutional Law. The aforementioned measure was beneficial in terms of further strengthening the equal and fair protection of human rights, improving the existing legal system and implemented measures in line with international legal norms and standards, as well as increasing the prospects for cooperation and accountability between state bodies and NGOs in this direction.

It should be noted that NGO representatives were involved as experts in the activities of the Ombudsman’s NPG in order to further improve independent and multidisciplinary control, develop effective interaction with the public, and apply a comprehensive and systematic approach to problems during visits to institutions where individuals cannot leave on their own will. This initiative is extremely important in terms of ensuring CSOs’ participation in the decision-making process, strengthening trust between governmental bodies and NGOs, as well as expanding opportunities for mutual exchange of experience between both the Ombudsman institution and NGOs.

Cooperation with the media. Effective cooperation with the media significantly contributes in ensuring transparency in the Ombudsman’s activities and strengthening an environment of mutual trust with the public. This cooperation is not limited to legal education and information, but also assume particular importance in terms of responding quickly to human rights violations and maintaining a balanced and objective position in the formation of public opinion.

The Ombudsman continued her communication activities in the field of human rights, in accordance with the Communication Strategy of the Ombudsman’s Office for 2024-2026, to expand cooperation with local and international media organizations through traditional and social media platforms, and strengthened relations with specialized media entities in order to disseminate information to a wide audience.

Within the Communication Strategy frameworks, the following priority areas have been identified: the preparation of various types of information materials in order to raise public awareness, the effective administrating the institution’s internet resources and social media platforms, ensuring the participation of media representatives in events organized in close cooperation with media entities, issues of public interest and information, as well as conducting regular monitoring through the media to analyze the status of ensuring human rights and freedoms.

Information about the Ombudsman’s directions of activity was regularly provided through the institution’s official website, official accounts on Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram and WhatsApp platforms, as well as audiovisual, online and print media.

Materials developed in order to raise awareness of the Ombudsman's activities in the field of human rights and freedoms in the international community and to shape a reference source of information were also broadcast through BBC, Anadolu Agency, TRT, MIR TV, TASS, RIA Novosti and other leading media entities. In total, 107 pieces of information were covered in this direction in foreign media.

Information published in the media regarding human rights was monitored, regular analyses were conducted, measures within legal frames were realized following the Ombudsman's authority on identified violations, and the results were covered in the media. The Ombudsman has expressed an operational position on the double standards demonstrated in the protection of human rights and freedoms, the biased position against our country, and speeches and writings containing elements of religious, ethnic and national discrimination, and information prepared in the Azerbaijani, English and Russian languages has been presented to the general public.

Information disseminated about law breaches against citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan abroad was analyzed by the Ombudsman, and authoritative and substantiated official positions were prepared in this regard and brought to the attention of a wide audience through both domestic and international information resources.

Within the framework of the "Human Rights Month-long Campaign" and "Children's Rights Month-long Campaign" announced by the Ombudsman, a public awareness campaign was carried out in local media entities, as well as on billboards installed in public spaces, at transport hubs and densely populated areas. In addition, within the framework of the Ombudsman's activities, social videos devoted to ensuring the right to equality and protecting PWDs' rights were broadcast on prime-time television channels.

In the post-Patriotic War period, consistent work was carried out to inform the world community about Armenia's actions that violate international law, including fundamental human rights. Thus, in the post-war period, regular appeals were made regarding the importance of ensuring long-term stability in the region, official statements were issued, and research materials on the consequences of the mine threat carried out by Armenia and mass graves identified in the liberated areas were presented to local and international information platforms; the operational position displayed by the Ombudsman was also communicated via social media channels.

The Ombudsman took appropriate measures on 786 applications received through social media accounts. During the year, 245 press releases were published in the Azerbaijani and English languages regarding the Ombudsman's activities.

In order to increase public awareness on the occasion of globally significant events and special days, posters and information on various topics were shared on the institution's social media accounts, and the Ombudsman gave interviews to audiovisual and online media entities operating both abroad and within the country.

The Ombudsman's statements, reactions and appeals, as well as educational and promotional materials on the occasion of the January 20 tragedy, the Khojaly Genocide, March 31 - Genocide Day of Azerbaijanis, September 27 - the 5th anniversary of the Day of Remembrance in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the 5th anniversary of the glorious Victory in the Patriotic War, as well as other human rights topics, were published through audiovisual, online and print media, these documents were sent to international organizations, ombudsmen and NHRIs of foreign countries.

Alongside with this, the participation of representatives of audiovisual, online and print media was ensured in order to widely cover local and international events held at the initiative of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's articles entitled "Children's constitutional rights are in the spotlight of the Ombudsman", "Human Rights Month successfully concluded", "A life dedicated to Azerbaijani science, civil society and human rights", "Our national press, formed and developed over 150 years", "Joint cooperation against global challenges is important" were published in the "Respublika" newspaper, as well as the articles

entitled “The Constitution - The Guarantor of Sovereignty and Human Rights”, “The Place and Importance of the Right to Mental Health in the Universal System of Human Rights”, “The Role of the Ombudsman in the Effective Protection of Children’s Rights”, “Institutional Basis of the Independence of Ombudsman Institutions” and “The Role of Ombudsman Institutions in the Protection of Migrants’ Rights” were published in the “Azerbaijan” newspaper, and the article “Guarantor of freedom and unity of the nation: the basic law as the support of statehood and legal order” (in Russian) was published in “Bakinskiy rabochiy” newspaper.

The abovementioned articles served to promote human rights, help citizens better recognize their rights and use defense mechanisms more effectively, and improve legal culture in general.

Legal awareness events organized on various topics within the framework of the “Year of Constitution and Sovereignty” were widely promoted using the opportunities of media platforms. In this context, staff members of the Ombudsman Office and regional centers participated in programs broadcast on local television channels on cases of violence against children and women, involvement of minors in illegal labor, elimination of discrimination, protection of the right to equality, and other relevant issues; statements and reactions were made through the media, and various educational materials were printed.

In 2025, a total of 4,083 pieces of information about the Ombudsman institution were published in both local and foreign media, of which 427 were on Facebook, 404 - on Instagram, 115 - on the X platform, 35 - on YouTube, 374 - on Telegram, and 378 were on WhatsApp. During the year, an increase in the number of followers and activity level of the Ombudsman’s official accounts was observed.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the investigation of applications received during the reported year, visits and monitoring carried out under the NPM and IMM, observations and legislative analysis, and information from media and social networks, the Ombudsman, guided by the principles of a social state put forward the following recommendations for more effective ensuring and protection of human rights and freedoms, improvement of the normative legal framework, implementation of best practices, strengthening the institutional coordination, and increasing the efficiency of state bodies:

- (1) Development and adoption of a National Action Program in the field of human rights for the forthcoming years in order to develop a legal culture in society and ensure the continuity of measures for improving the regulatory and legal framework, human rights protection system and governance, to further develop international and regional cooperation in this direction, as a logical continuation of the reforms carried out in the field of ensuring, protecting and promoting human rights and freedoms and in accordance with modern challenges, the requirements of the new era and existing priorities protecting the rights of various groups of the population;
- (2) development and adoption of the “State Program on Business and Human Rights” considering the reforms implemented as well as the programs, plans and strategies adopted for the development of business in the country, the UN “Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” and the “Guidance on National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights”, as well as the international best practices in this area in order to ensure human rights and freedoms in the conduct of business activities, to promote and implement corporate social responsibility and enable more active participation of entrepreneurs in the country’s socio-economic life, as well as to ensure coordination of the activities of relevant institutions in this field;
- (3) identification of priority areas in the field of digital technologies and improvement of the regulatory and legal framework, implementation of educational programs on the responsible use of AI and digital technologies, and promotion of a culture of digital literacy and information security, in light of modern challenges, in particular the rapid development of information technologies and the increasing integration of AI across all sectors, which also necessitate the adoption of new approaches to the protection of human rights and freedoms;
- (4) increasing proportionally all pensions awarded prior to the adjustment, regardless of their amount, in line with the relevant increase or by a fixed amount (or percentage) when the minimum labor pension is raised;
- (5) reducing by one year the period specified in Article 39.1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Labor Pensions” for deductions from overpaid labor pensions and supplements from pensioners (currently, this deduction is intended to be made for the last 3 years) considering that the overpayment of labor pensions and associated supplements did not result from any fault on the part of the pensioner, but from shortcomings of the relevant institution, and that subsequent deductions adversely affected the pensioner’s social situation;
- (6) inclusion of persons with a minimum of 35 years of civil service in the list of those entitled to preferential labor pensions and making appropriate amendments to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Labor Pensions”;
- (7) replacement of the two-year period provided for in paragraph 1.2 of the “Rules for the Organization of Self-Employment” approved by Resolution No. 168 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 13, 2020, with a five-year period for unemployed people close to retirement age, in order to increase efficiency in providing them close to retirement age, as well as to make changes to that paragraph to include persons with three or more dependent children in order to strengthen the social protection of large families;
- (8) review the composition and quantity of the minimum consumer basket and to adapt it to real needs;

- (9) redetermination of the internet services fee, considering the existing internet tariffs (taking into account the absence of hourly tariffs), and to make appropriate amendments to Resolution No. 118 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 23, 2005, "On Approval of the Composition of the Minimum Consumer Basket in the Republic of Azerbaijan";
- (10) based on the results of the analysis of complaints addressed to the Ombudsman, to reduce deadlines specified in paragraph 1.5.1 of the "Rules for issuing referrals for medical and social expertise for the purpose of disability assessment" approved by the Resolution No. 12 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated January 16, 2020, with making appropriate amendments and to issue in the following content:
 - (11) "1.5.1. Even though the person has been in outpatient or inpatient treatment for the same disease for a total of more than 3 (three) months continuously for the last 3 (three) months or intermittently for the last 6 (six) months, the impaired functions of the body are not restored and the person has persistent physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that prevent him/her from fully and effectively participating in the life of society;"
- (12) ensuring coordinated and mutually trust-based activities among institutions participating in the disability assessment process, and simplifying assessment procedures taking into consideration that in many cases, referrals formalized by medical advisory commissions for the purpose of assessing disability status are considered "incomplete", leading to difficulties in the assessment process and a certain delay in determining disability, as well as citizens being forced to reapply, and ultimately creating obstacles to the prompt and effective provision of rights,
- (13) considering PWDs' needs during the design and construction of infrastructure facilities and residential buildings, including the adaptation of existing (ones) as well as public transport, especially metro stations, for the use of PWDs, is of particular importance, to prepare and implement specific action mechanisms in order to update design standards, strengthen control over accessibility requirements during the construction process, monitor existing facilities in terms of accessibility, identify and eliminate deficiencies, and provide metro and other means of transport with accessibility components, also to involve PWDs and specialized NGOs representing them in this activity;
- (14) development and implementation of an accessible signing mechanism that allows these persons to read and approve documents through "ASAN signature" with the support of a voice interface and screen reader, or other accessible signing mechanism, in order to legally recognize the signatures of visually impaired persons and eliminate the requirement for a third party to be present during signing;
- (15) joining the Amman-Berlin Declaration on Global Disability Inclusion in order to more effectively ensure the implementation of international obligations in PWDs' rights protection field in accordance with the CRPD requirements, strengthen the country's social inclusion policy, improve national legislation, and further strengthen our country's international position in building an inclusive society;
- (16) making amendments to the "Rules for the Organization of Self-Employment" approved by Resolution No. 168 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 13, 2020, in order to determine the period until the conclusion of the contract for the property transfer, calculated from the date on which the decision of the relevant local commission created by the MLSPP State Employment Agency on engaging in self-employment is posted in the e-cabinet of the unemployed and job-seeking person, sent to his/her postal address and mobile phone via SMS;
- (17) taking into account that in some cases the process of providing unemployed persons with appropriate property takes more than a year until the process of organizing self-employment is fully completed (property is transferred), to make appropriate amendments to the legislation for the elimination of restrictions on their ability to benefit from other forms of employment or apply for targeted state social assistance;
- (18) clearly specifying the period within which training should be held to assist unemployed and job seekers in choosing a self-employment direction and preparing business plans in the "Rules for Organizing Self-

Employment”, approved by the Resolution No. 168 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 13, 2020, and making relevant amendments to that Rule in this regard in order to eliminate delays and procrastination in organizing self-employment;

- (19) taking into account the requirements of Article 79 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to make amendments to Article 91 of the Code regarding the application of reduced working hours for employees suffering from severe diabetes or multiple sclerosis, as well as having a child with limited physical capacities or a family member who has been diagnosed with a disability due to 81-100% impairment of body functions;
- (20) reviewing weekly and daily work norms in order to ensure the physical and psychological health of employees, maintaining a balance in family and social life (creating conditions for devoting more time to family relationships, raising children, and social activities), as well as increasing labor productivity, taking into account the international best experience;
- (21) making appropriate amendments to Article 116 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adding provisions on granting additional leave to an employee for 6 calendar days if the length of service is from 15 to 20 years, and for 8 calendar days if the length of service is more than 20 years in order to ensure more effective labor and leisure rights of employees;
- (22) adding a new article entitled “Psychological pressure (mobbing) at work” to the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and summarizing the related legal relations in that article;
- (23) making relevant amendment to Article 69 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (procedure for Termination of an Employment Contract by an Employee) regarding the possibility of unilateral termination of an employment contract by an employee in cases where the employee is subjected to repeated psychological violence (mobbing) at the workplace;
- (24) replacing the words “may be canceled” with the words “shall be canceled” in Articles 3 and 3-1 of Article 69 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to increase efficiency in ensuring the labor rights of employees and prevent abuses;
- (25) including persons over 60 years of age in the list of employees and cases where termination of employment contracts is prohibited, as set by Article 79 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- (26) strengthening control measures in order to prevent rendering of medical services (especially dentistry, plastic surgery, etc.) by unlicensed and unqualified persons;
- (27) ensuring the availability of specialized medical services in the regions and thereby ensuring a balanced organization of healthcare infrastructure across the country, as well as to improve the quality of primary healthcare services in order to effectively implement the population’s right to health;
- (28) taking into account the age, health status, social status and special needs of vulnerable population groups - children, the elderly, PWDs and low-income families, to expand the network of services covering primary medical care, home medical care, specialized treatment, provision of medicines, psychological assistance and medical rehabilitation, and to ensure unhindered access to these services, to improve the electronic health system and to make it accessible to all, to increase the efficiency of the compulsory health insurance system and support the quality of service through continuous monitoring mechanisms;
- (29) adapting to the requirements of modern times of the Resolution No. 87 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 13, 2005, “On approval of the volume of annual medical care (including necessary examinations), list and quantity of injection devices, insulin and other hypoglycemic drugs, self-control devices provided to persons with diabetes mellitus” and “On approval of the Rules for providing persons with diabetes mellitus with insulin and other hypoglycemic drugs, injection devices and self-control devices” considering the comprehensive analyses and assessments conducted in recent years regarding the application of new scientific and medical knowledge, as well as positive experiences in this field (for

example, in the Turkish experience, the monthly norm of visual test sticks for type 1 diabetes patients is set at 150 units);

- (30) reviewing the financial guarantees provided for by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated August 5, 2009, "On measures to encourage the involvement of medical personnel in medical institutions in rural areas", in accordance with the socio-economic requirements of the time;
- (31) expanding the scope of the network of awareness-raising and preventive programs among young people, improving psychological and social support programs for risk groups, taking into consideration existing international experience in order to strengthen the fight against drug addiction and toxicomania, and to further strengthen coordination among institutions in this field;
- (32) speeding up the adoption of the National Strategy on Mental Health with the aim to ensure the mental health of the population and reduce the risk of developing severe mental disorders, create favorable conditions for providing accessible, high-quality and comprehensive assistance to people suffering from mental disorders, protect their rights and interests, and implement comprehensive measures to ensure their social protection;
- (33) ensuring the operation of private centers rendering rehabilitation services based on special agreements and regular supervision of these activities;
- (34) development of mechanisms to prevent the provision of appropriate sessions and counseling services via the Internet and social networks by persons who are not authorized to provide mental health care Based on the results of monitoring conducted on social networks;
- (35) expanding the range of drugs used in the treatment of oncological diseases, to revise the "Program of Measures on the Provision of Oncological Patients with Basic Antitumor Drugs" approved by the Resolution No.178 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated July 19, 2006, in accordance with modern requirements;
- (36) adjustment of the number of kindergartens to the growing population and number of families, as well as to ensure accessibility to these facilities;
- (37) providing the relevant supplies to students at the state's expense, taking into account that secondary education is compulsory in our country and that the curriculum includes the use of a comprehensive range of other study and support materials, in addition to textbooks;
- (38) taking into account that the heavy curriculum, and therefore the large number of textbooks and their sets, have a negative impact on the overloading of the backpacks of students, especially in primary school, and consequently on their health and physical development, to optimize the curriculum, to use integrated, more compact teaching materials instead of several additional materials on the same subject, to expand the use of digital resources and to strengthen the material and technical base in educational institutions in this regard, as well as to install lockers at school so that students can store not daily use supplies;
- (39) taking into account problems following from the organization of the educational process between different age groups and educational levels when the class, where the number of students in a primary education is less than 10, is combined with another primary education class with also less than 10 students, according to paragraph 4 of the "Norms of student density by class in state general education facilities", approved by the Resolution No.212 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 22, 2020, as well as negative impacts on the quality of education and students' mastering of program materials, to review relevant norms and to increase the number of teachers in relevant educational facilities to ensure that students acquire knowledge and skills in line with state educational standards;
- (40) considering its special importance for human life or health, to devote more attention to the quality, safety and diet of nutrition in preschool, secondary and higher education facilities, to bolster control over the sale of food products that are prohibited for consumption by minors or are considered inappropriate;

- (41) taking into consideration planning of wider application of the “School Buses” pilot project realized in Baku city to facilitate students’ travel to and from educational institutions, to revise the service fees in the view of minimum living wage in the country;
- (42) Making relevant amendments to the “Rules for organizing education at the bachelor’s and master’s levels of higher education facilities, basic (base higher) medical education with a credit system” approved by the Resolution No.348 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan (December 24, 2013), the “Rules for organizing education at the credit system in secondary specialized education facilities” approved by the Resolution No.354 (December 26, 2013), and the “Rules for organizing education at the higher technical vocational education level in vocational education facilities with a credit system” approved by the Resolution No.72 (March 9, 2022), pursuant to the Decision of the Plenum of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 22, 2025, in cases where students studying in higher education, secondary specialized and vocational education facilities are unable to attend more than 25% of the class hours in a subject due to temporary loss of working capacity (due to illness, quarantine and other reasons), in order to ensure that those students are admitted to the exams based on the relevant medical certificate;
- (43) adding the position of “child psychologist” to the “Model Staff of Kindergartens” (Appendix No. 1) and “Model Staff of Nursery Schools-Kindergartens” (Appendix No. 2) approved by the Resolution No. 61 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan (May 29, 1996) “On the Model Staff of Budget-Financed Preschool Educational Facilities”;
- (44) increasing the age limit of 23 established in Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Perpetuating the Memory of Martyr and Benefits of Families of Martyrs” for those studying in secondary vocational, technical schools and higher educational institutions in order to raise the efficiency of ensuring the right to education of martyr’s family members;
- (45) creating a single centralized national library platform in order to ensure the integration of existing library funds across the country into a single digital system, create online and equal access to library resources for each person, as well as more efficient use of financial and human resources, and optimize management and technical costs;
- (46) making amendments to Article 222.7 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Article 15.1.5 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Media” prohibiting the disclosure of information about the identity of minor suspects, accused or victims without specifying exceptional cases;
- (47) based on the CRC requirements, to add a provision to Article 123-2 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan prohibiting the dissemination by participants in criminal proceedings of investigation materials related to a child victim of sexual violence;
- (48) making amendments to Articles 192.3 and 197.1 of the Civil Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan related to learning the opinion of children whose interests are affected by the dispute and the participation of a psychologist during the interrogation of a minor witness during the resolution of disputes related to the rights and interests of children;
- (49) considering that the Ombudsman, within the framework of her mandate established by the Constitutional Law, functions as an IMM to monitor and promote the CRC implementation, making the following amendments to the “Regulations on the state control of realization of the rights of children” approved by the Decree No. 626 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 8, 2012:
- adding a new paragraph 1.3-1 regarding the function of an IMM to monitor and promote the CRC implementation;
 - making an adding to paragraph 6.5 regarding the participation of the Ombudsman’s representative;

- making an addition the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan to paragraph 1.3 of the Regulation;
- (50) in order to identify and prevent situations that promote violence, to conduct continuous monitoring of social networks, platforms, and websites, including TV programs, films and games, that are most commonly used by children in the country, identifying situations that may negatively affect the psyche, health and behavior of people of this age and taking restrictive measures, and making appropriate amendments to the legislation in this regard;
 - (51) taking into account current innovations and modern requirements related to the IT development, to revise the Resolution No. 158 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan (July 26, 2012) On approving the "List of paid information services, the Payment procedure for preparation and provision of information, advance Payment Cases for provision of information, the Condition of provision of discount in case of payment and Conditions and the Procedure for satisfaction of query on contractual basis";
 - (52) since the current text of Article 9.3.1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Access to Information" restricts the ability of individuals to obtain personal information about themselves from natural monopoly entities based on an information request, to make appropriate amendments to that article and adding the words "personal information about themselves to natural persons" to the text of the article;
 - (53) ratification of the Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 223) (Convention 108+);
 - (54) Inclusion of provisions on "Cyberbullying" in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to provide legal assessment of behaviors that result in technical or moral harm to an individual or a group of individuals or legal entities using ICT;
 - (55) conducting continuous monitoring of the impact of contemporary IT on consumer rights, to adapt legislation, especially the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Protection of Consumer Rights", "On Electronic Commerce" and other regulatory legal acts to modern requirements based on positive international experience, as well as to prepare educational supplies on the protection of consumer rights and to carry out joint educational events for target groups;
 - (56) making relevant amendments to paragraph 9.5.1 of the "Rules for the Use of Heat", approved by the Resolution No. 303 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 5, 2023, in order to calculate tariffs for heat supply services based on the actual area of the consumer's apartment, rather than the total area;
 - (57) applying concessions in public transport for pensioners, PWDs, pupils and students, taking into account the positive experience of foreign countries;
 - (58) increasing the number of buses that meet modern standards (including considering the purchase of double-decker buses with a large capacity) in order to stimulate the use of public transport in Baku, thereby minimizing the flow of private cars into the city center, reducing intervals considering intensity (sometimes this period exceeds 10-20 minutes), strengthening control over drivers' professional level and adherence to ethical conduct rules, to ensure proper ventilation in buses according to weather conditions (the failure to open the vents and windows in buses, as well as the failure to turn on the ventilation system, causes justified dissatisfaction with the "airiness" during times of high passenger traffic, even when the weather is cold), also improving the rules for boarding and disembarking buses, considering that they cause considerable delays for buses and passengers during rush hour;
 - (59) by making appropriate amendments to Article 13-1.1 of the Land Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan to determine whether permanent residential buildings intended for the production and processing of agricultural products, as well as for the temporary residence of workers (personnel), can be constructed and installed on agricultural land plots with an area (except for summer and winter pastures, grazing areas

- in common use) of not less than one hectare and located within a single boundary, not exceeding one percent;
- (60) reviewing the amount (0.35 manat) established for the work performed by a translator, specialist or expert during criminal proceedings, as provided for in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Resolution No. 31 of the Cabinet of Ministers (February 1, 2001) "About the size of the amounts which are subject to payment to defenders, translators, specialists and experts";
- (61) in order to ensure the right to equality and eliminate discrimination to make appropriate amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan in connection with the provision in Article 233.2 (Interrogation of the Accused) regarding the interrogation of the accused person only during the daytime, except in urgent cases, and also applying it to other participants in the criminal proceedings during interrogation;
- (62) taking into consideration that the terms "computer system" and "computer data" reflected in Chapter 30 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan do not fully correspond to the level of development of modern information technologies, to improve the relevant chapter based on "e-information systems", "e-information platforms", "AI technologies" and other modern requirements;
- (63) making amendment to Article 9 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Registration of Residence and Sojourn" regarding the application of a simplified extrajudicial mechanism (based on the application of the new owner) for the removal of persons previously registered at that address from the residence registration when the residence is alienated;
- (64) considering that in some cases the financial situation of the person against whom proceedings are being conducted on an administrative offense case does not meet the level to conclude a contract with a lawyer, and also that the amount of administrative disciplinary measures in some sorts of fines leads to ineffective results for defense by a lawyer (fees for using the services of a lawyer may exceed the amount of the corresponding fine), as well as in order to ensure that persons against whom proceedings are being conducted on an administrative offense case enjoy protection opportunities equally with victims, to make relevant amendment to Article 65.1-1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the right of individuals against whom proceedings are being conducted on an administrative offense case to appoint a close relative as a representative in court;
- (65) making relevant amendments to Article 14.3-2.1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On State Duty" in order to issue or replace an ID to a citizen of the Republic of Azerbaijan who has not reached the age of 15 within 10 days, on a free of charge, except for the cases provided for in Article 14.3-1 of that Law;
- (66) in order to ensure the timely realization of the right to education without discrimination and thereby ensure the right to equality, to make relevant amendments to Article 21 (Deferral of conscription to continue education) of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Military Duty and Military Service" in order to provide for the deferral of conscription for persons studying in the form of correspondence education;
- (67) equalizing the rights and provisions, including bedding, of soldiers (sailors) and sergeants who are disciplinary arrested, and detained in the main guardhouse with the guarantees and rights provided for officers, warrant officers (midshipmen) detained in the main guard, as well as military personnel detained (arrested) by the body conducting criminal proceedings;
- (68) applying the Decree No. 569 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 28, 2011 "On measures to strengthen the social protection of military personnel of the Azerbaijani Army" to all military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan (except for military personnel on temporary active military service);
- (69) in order to strengthen the social protection of military personnel, to adjust the amount of monthly-paid monetary compensation for food the monthly value of food products specified in the "Composition of the

Minimum Consumer Basket in the Republic of Azerbaijan”, approved by the Resolution No. 118 Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 23 June 2005;

- (70) increasing the amount of financial support paid to military personnel (except for temporary active military personnel) for the position they hold, as well as military ranks;
- (71) increasing the amount of monetary compensation established for temporary housing rental for military personnel, considering the real situation, as well as the increase in housing rental prices;
- (72) based on the analysis of the applications received by the Ombudsman, to develop rules for allowing personnel officers who are unable to complete their service within the period stipulated by the legislation for one reason or another to be released into the reserve in accordance with their wishes, with the condition that the expenses incurred by the state for their education are calculated over the appropriate period and reimbursed to the state;
- (73) clarifying the status of persons who participated in the military operations for the territorial integrity of our Republic (April 2016 battles, July 2020 Tovuz battles and other military clashes), as well as in the local anti-terrorist operation conducted in 2023, from the First Karabakh War to the beginning of the Patriotic War;
- (74) adjustment of the amount of the allowance paid to a person’s children during his/her term of active military service to the minimum subsistence level established for children in the country;
- (75) including persons who have been diagnosed with disabilities as a result of injuries, trauma and wounds received while performing military service duties (service duties) to Article 14.8-1.5 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Education”;
- (76) since Article 23 of the Disciplinary Regulations of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan “For female military personnel in the ranks of soldiers, sailors and sergeants, incentives provided for in Article 22 of this Regulation, with the exception of paragraphs “e” (to grant the military rank of senior soldier (senior sailor)), “ə” (to grant sergeants with overtime a rank one step higher than the rank established for their position on the staff) and “i” (to grant short-term leave of up to 10 days to conscripts, sailors and sergeants (except for cadets of higher military schools), without taking into account the time spent traveling to and from the place of leave), are applied” creates a contradiction in terms of ensuring the right to equality, to make appropriate amendments to the Regulation to eliminate these exceptional circumstances;
- (77) adding a provision to the Charter of the Garrison and Guard Services of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan stipulating that detained and arrested military personnel must undergo a medical examination within 24 hours of their admission to the guardhouse and that appropriate records be kept about this;
- (78) reinforcement of the requirements of Article 9.3.1 of the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan with precise procedural mechanisms in the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and to eliminate functional problems in the mentioned field, thereby to make necessary additions and amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to protect the right of individuals to free movement from unjustified restrictions and to prevent contradictory practices in the activities of law enforcement agencies;
- (79) developing a mechanism to allow juvenile convicts, as well as convicts who do not pose a particular public danger and have committed less serious crimes, to participate in entrance exams to higher education institutions;
- (80) in order to ensure access to the Ombudsman for persons sentenced to imprisonment for a certain period of time and life-prisoners and to ensure more reliable protection of their rights, to establish in the relevant legislation the right to additional telephone calls for these individuals to contact the Ombudsman’s Call Center alongside the right to phone calls provided by the law;

- (81) considering the degree and nature of the public danger of the committed act, to engage convicts in relevant areas during their sentence in accordance with their qualifications and professional skills (if they have not been convicted of a criminal act related to their profession), to use their knowledge and skills effectively, thereby to take measures to increase the effectiveness of the correctional process for those convicts;
- (82) establishing in the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Persons Held in Places of Detention” the right of arrested persons to conduct a video-meeting with their close relatives or other persons whose contact is of legitimate interest to them, in the manner and in the cases provided for by this Law;
- (83) in order to eliminate the concerns arising from the restriction of the right of convicts transferred to the punishment cell in the institutions where they are serving their sentences, and the lack of information about this by family members, to establish a provision in legislation regarding informing relatives of persons subject to such disciplinary sanctions, and to ensure the effective operation of the Penitentiary Service Hotline in this regard;
- (84) in order to eliminate the negative effects of overcrowding in penitentiary institutions on access to medical services, especially considering the large number of persons detained in pre-trial detention centers, to adjust both medical staff and medicines and other medical supplies to the actual number of detainees, not to the institution’s detention limit;
- (85) making appropriate amendments to Article 511.2 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the issue of exempting a convict from serving a sentence due to illness, including consideration based on the Ombudsman’s submission;
- (86) making necessary amendments to Article 513.1 of the Criminal Procedure Code regarding the issue of conditional early release from serving a sentence and replacing the unserved part of the sentence with a lighter sentence, as well as consideration of the Ombudsman’s solicitation;

Alongside the abovementioned, in order to increase the effectiveness of the Ombudsman’s activities, to fully align the mandate of the Ombudsman with the Paris Principles adopted by the UN GA Resolution dated December 20, 1993, as well as taking into account the provisions of the Recommendation Resolution of April 28, 2025 on “Ombudsman Institutions in TURKPA Member States” adopted by the Azerbaijani Ombudsman at the 12th Meeting of the Legal Affairs and International Relations Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic States (hereinafter - TURKPA) on the topic of “Ombudsman Institutions in the Member States of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic States”, the following is recommended:

- (87) granting the Ombudsman “right of legislative initiative”, taking into account the positive experience of foreign countries, in order to significantly increase the effectiveness of the Ombudsman’s activities in the field of improving legislation, to submit new draft normative legal acts to the legislative body in an operational manner without wasting time, and thereby achieve more effective protection of rights and freedoms;
- (88) legally establishing the right of the Ombudsman to participate in the discussion of draft laws related to human rights in the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan and to express his/her opinion, considering the importance of the Ombudsman’s cooperation with the Parliament in the improvement of legislation;

In order to improve the institutional structure of the Ombudsman Office and organize its activities more effectively, the following are proposed:

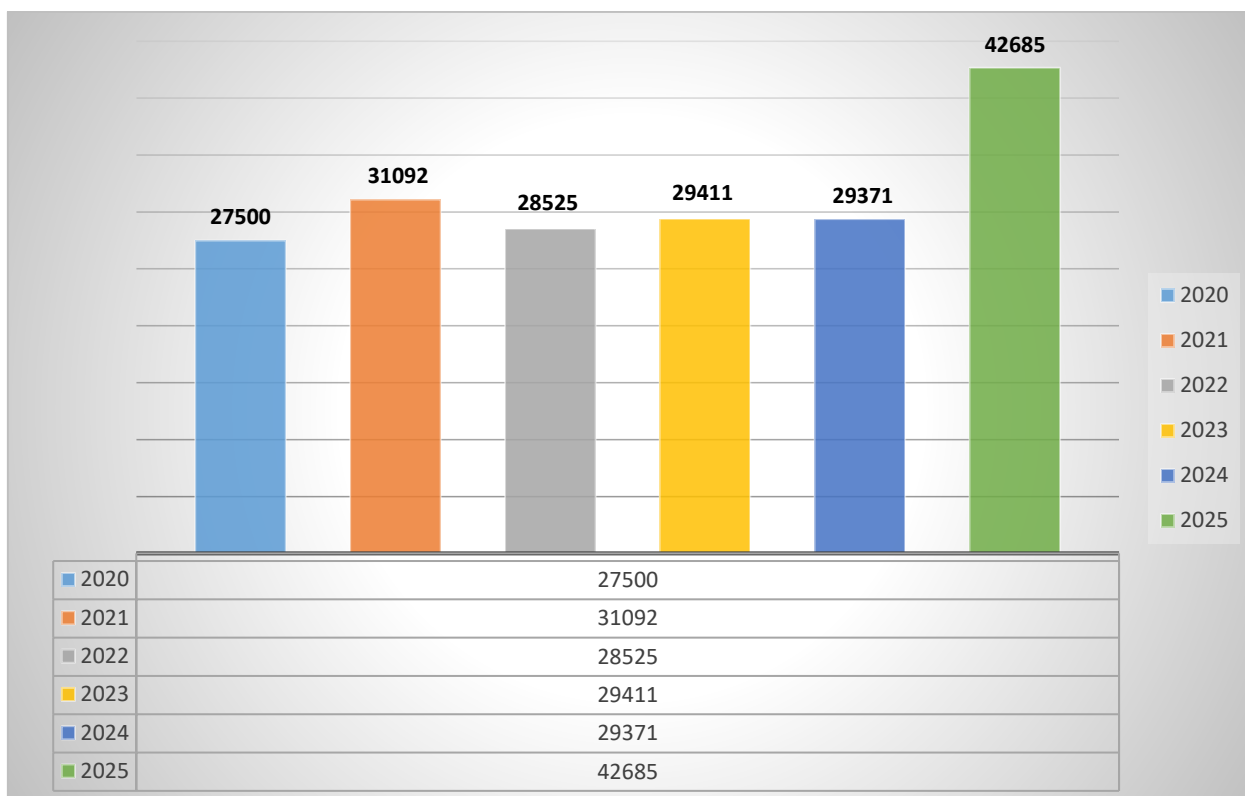
- (89) taking into account the requirements of Articles 1.3-1 (IMM Mandate) and 13-3 (Features of the Implementation of the IMM Functions) of the Constitutional Law on the Ombudsman, as well as taking into account the provisions of Articles 1.3 (Mandate for supervision over the fulfillment of duties arising from the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Access to Information”) and 13-1 (Features of

consideration of complaints regarding violation of the right to access information) of the Constitutional Law, as well as the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Access to Information”, in particular Articles 8, 15, 34, 36 and 38, To amend Paragraph 27 of the “List of officials authorized to draw up protocols on cases of administrative offenses considered by district (city) courts” as follows by adding Articles 205-1.1 and 375 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

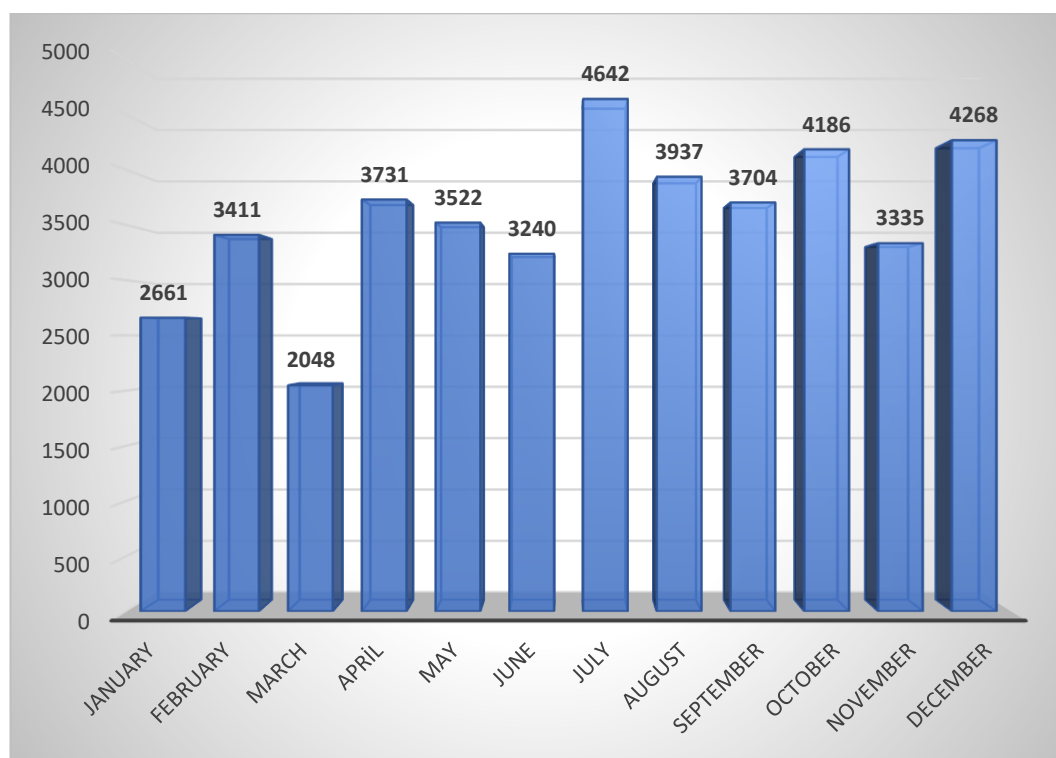
“27. Protocol on cases on administrative offenses provided for in Articles 205-1.1, 371 - 374, 375, 381.2, 381.3 and 554 of the Code on behalf of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan - the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Head of his/her Office, the Deputy Head of the Office, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the Head of his/her Office, the Deputy Head of the Office.”;

- (90) considering that the sanction provided for in Article 554 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Azerbaijan for obstructing the lawful activities of the Ombudsman, as well as his/her NPG and independent monitoring group, does not fully reflect the importance of the Ombudsman’s supreme constitutional mandate to protect human rights, and is not effective in terms of deterrent and preventive effect, and is disproportionate compared to sanctions applied for other administrative offenses, to increasing the fine amount provided for in that article;
- (91) taking into account the rapid development of digitalization processes and the growing demand for e-information resources, with the purpose to effectively organize the accessibility of the human rights library formed over the years in the Ombudsman's Office to everyone, thereby to expand equal and operational access to resources in the human rights field , and to create opportunities for effective use of this information, especially for citizens living in the regions, as well as for users conducting research remotely, to provide appropriate financial support for the organization of an e-library on human rights in the Ombudsman Office;
- (92) following the amendments to the Constitutional Law, the Ombudsman’s empowerment with the function of an IMM to monitor and promote the CRPD and CRC implementation, as well as the provision of the right to equality and the prevention of discrimination, as well as taking into account the new challenges of the time, to enhance the human and material base of the Ombudsman Office and to provide additional financial support for the implementation of modern technologies.

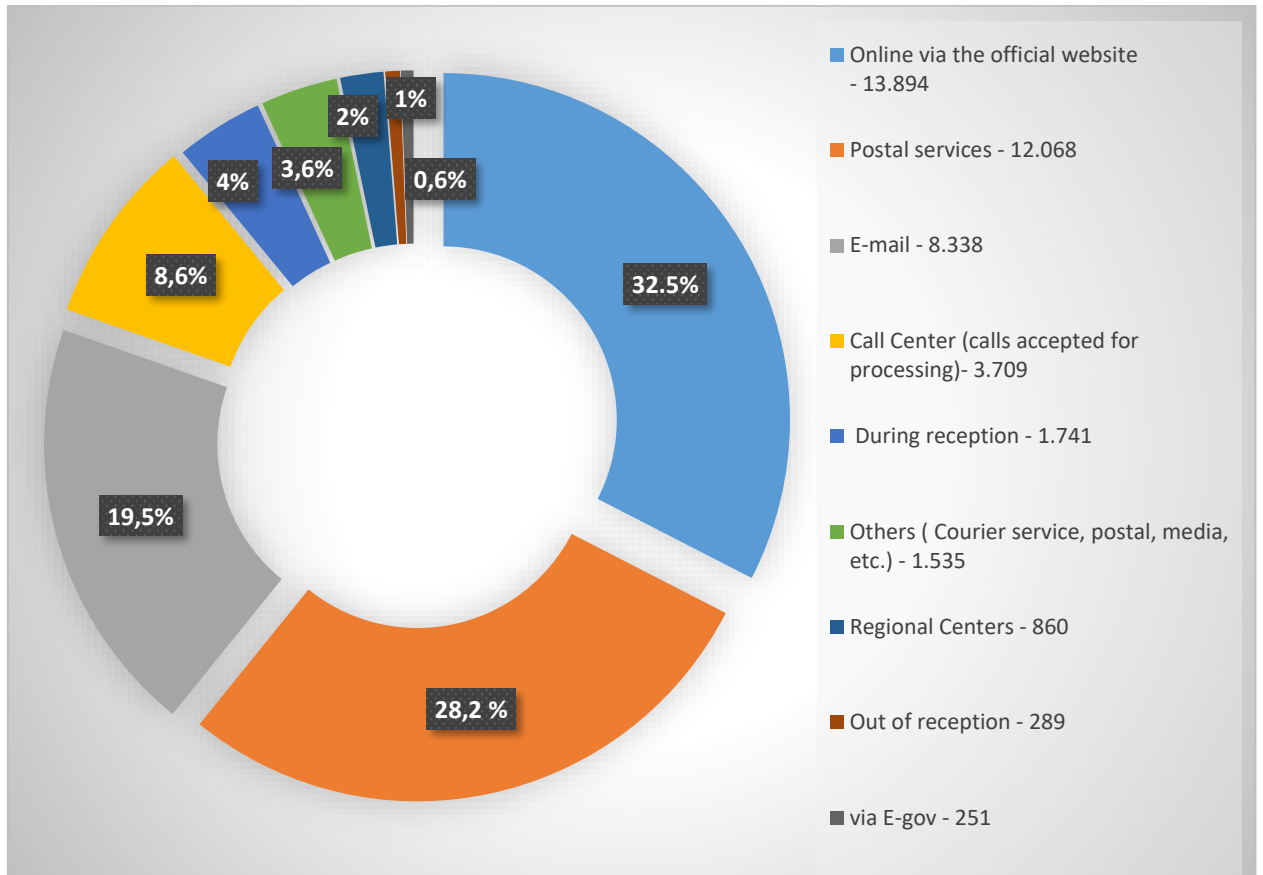
Comparative statistics (in figures) of applications received by the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan during 2020-2025



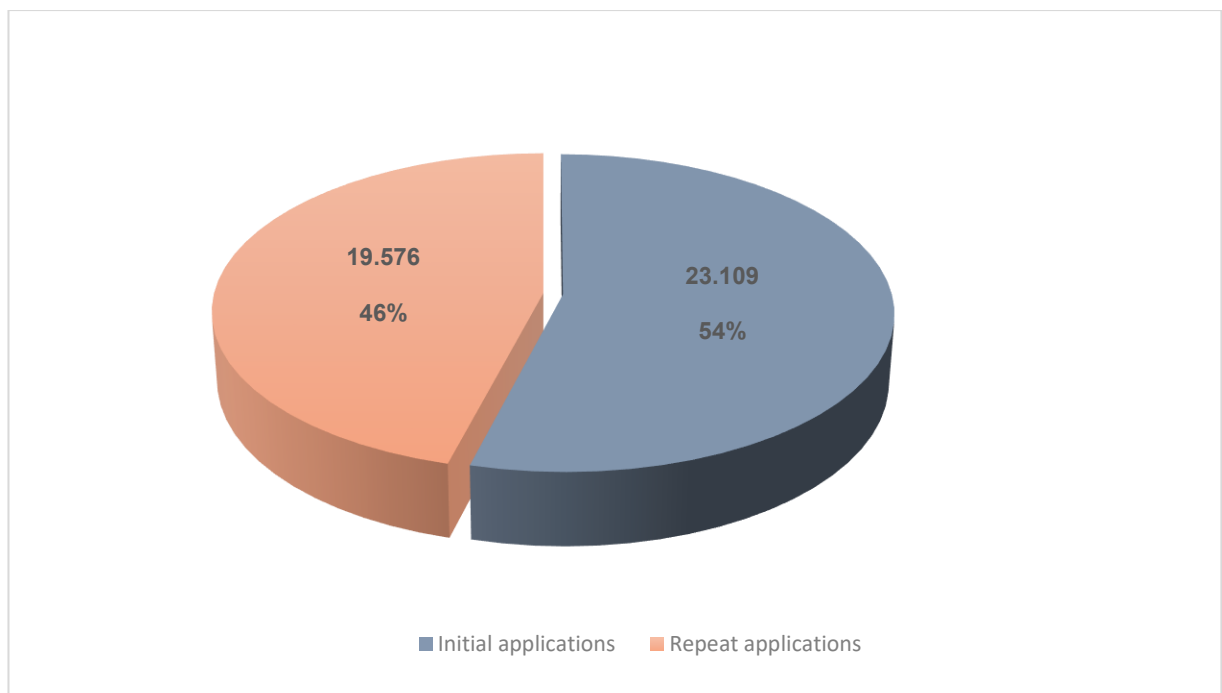
Monthly statistics of applications received by the Ombudsman in 2025 (in figures)



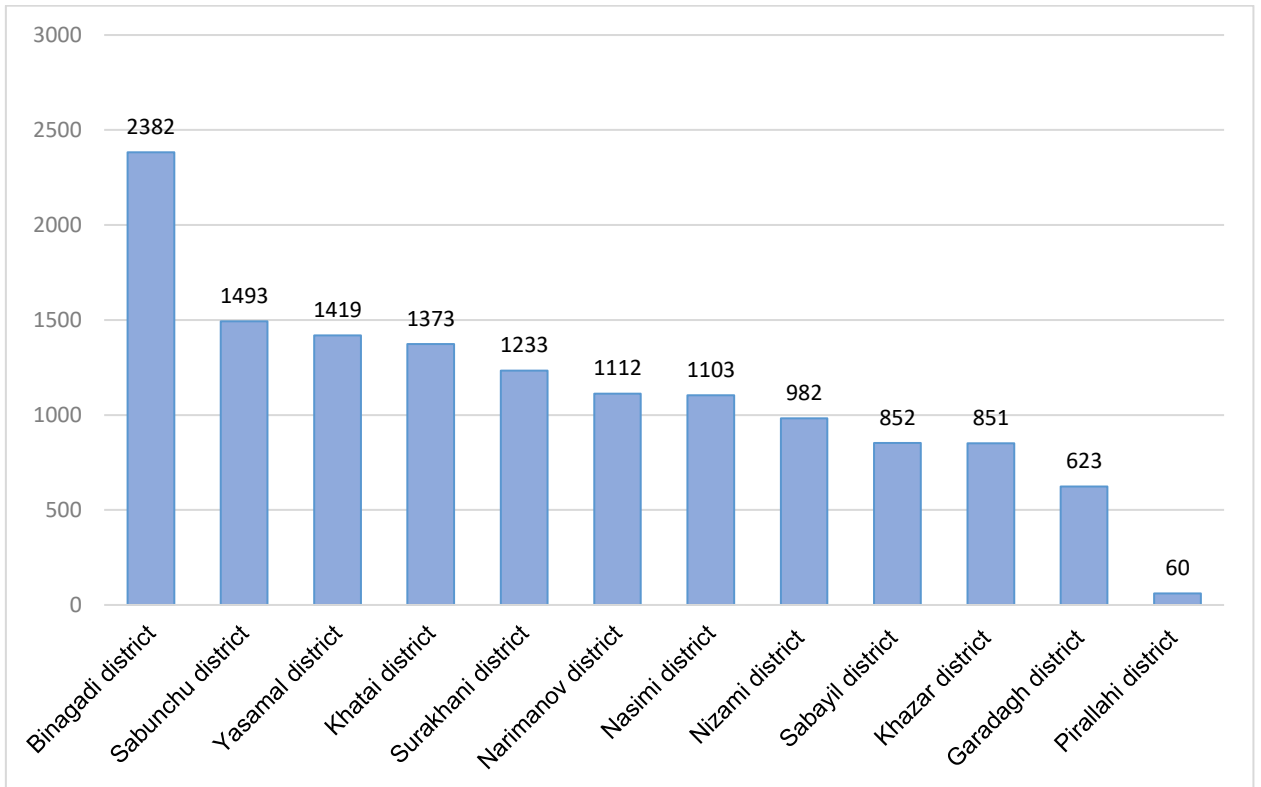
Statistics on applications in 2025 by method of submission (in numbers and percentages)



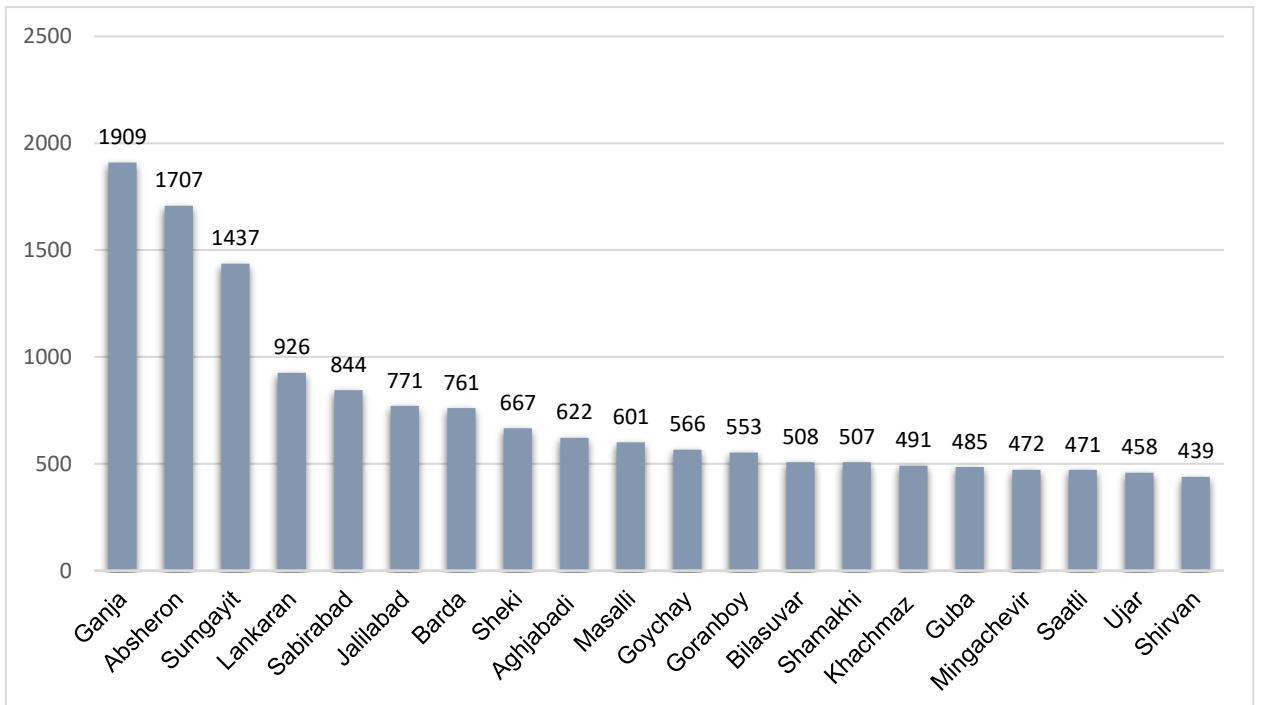
Statistics on applications in 2025 by status (in numbers and percentages)



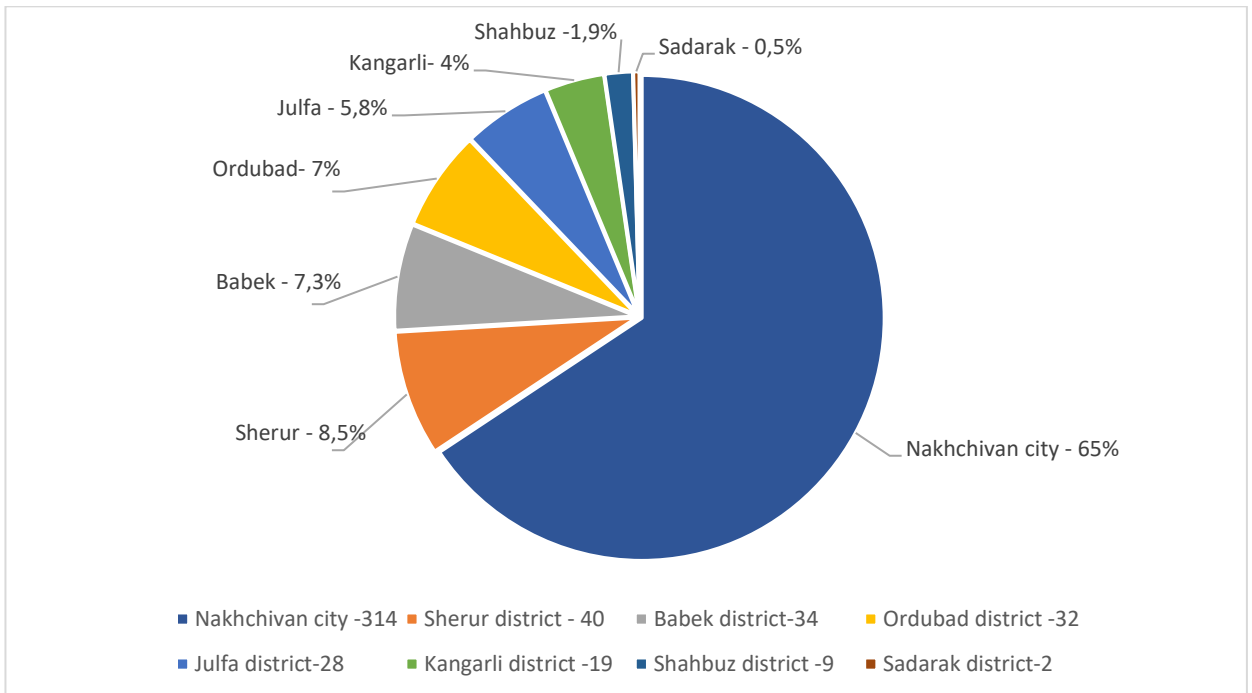
Statistics on applications received from the districts of Baku in 2025 (in figures)



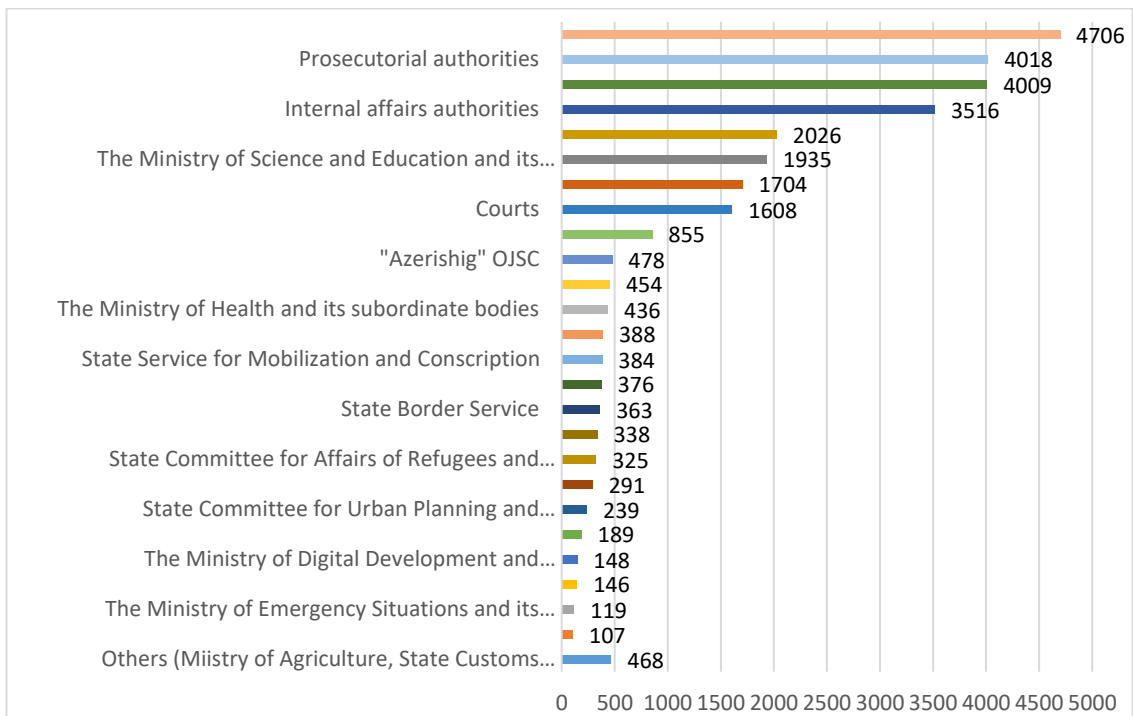
Statistics on applications received across the country (other cities and districts) in 2025 (top 20 cities and districts, in figures)



Statistics on incoming applications from the cities and districts of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in 2025 (in numbers and percentages)



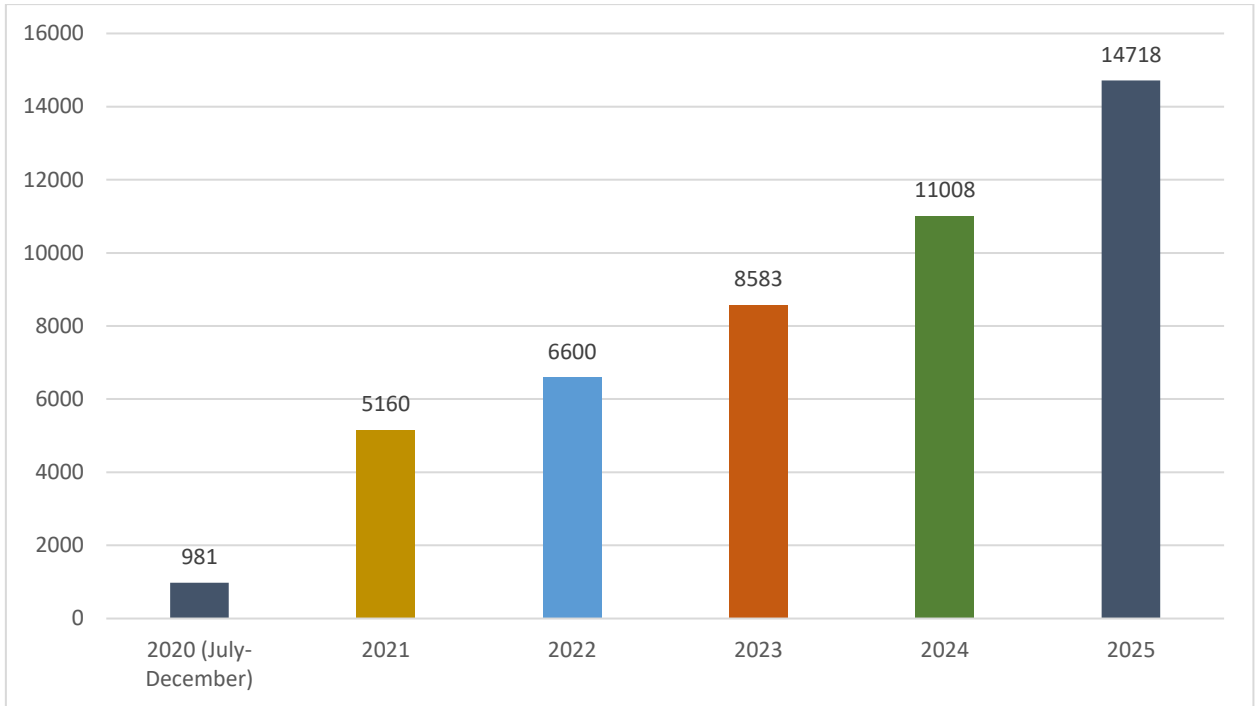
Statistics on applications submitted in 2025 by institution (in figures)



Note 1: The chart does not include applications concerning employment, medical treatment, financial assistance and similar matters, applications for pardon, complaints against non-governmental entities and citizens, as well as applications in which no subject was specified.

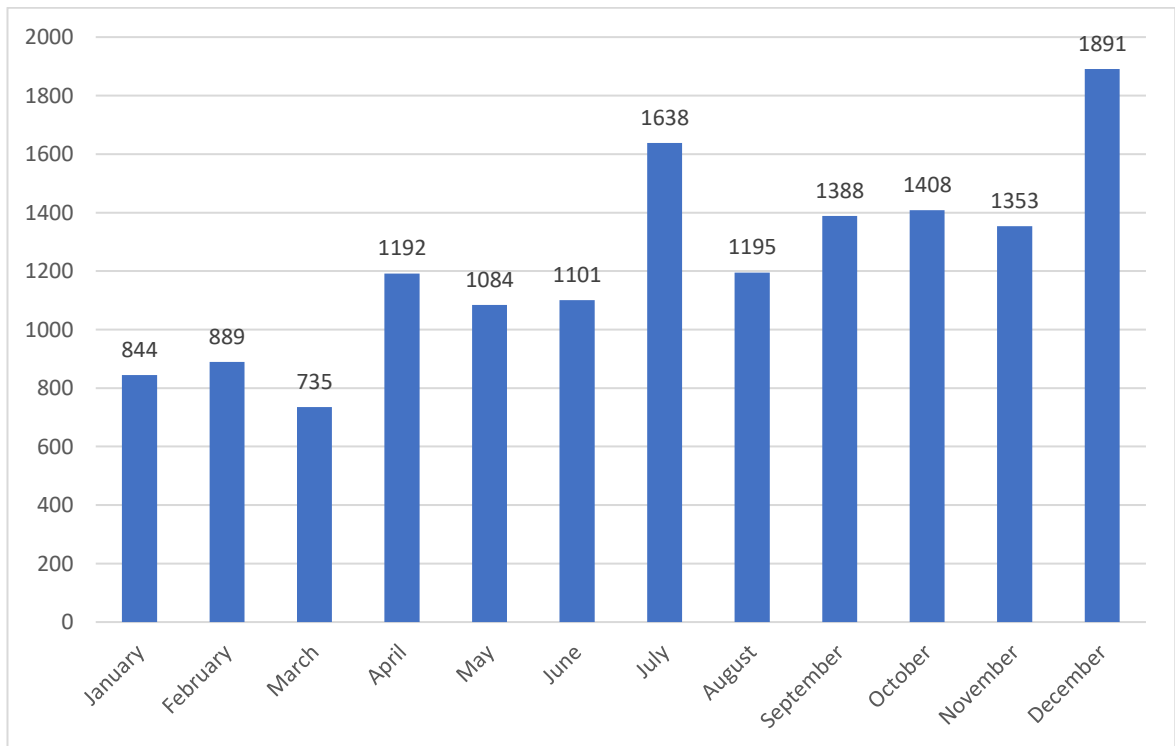
Note 2: The chart does not include calls responded to verbally by the Call Center.

Comparative statistics of calls received by the Ombudsman's Call Center during 2020-2025

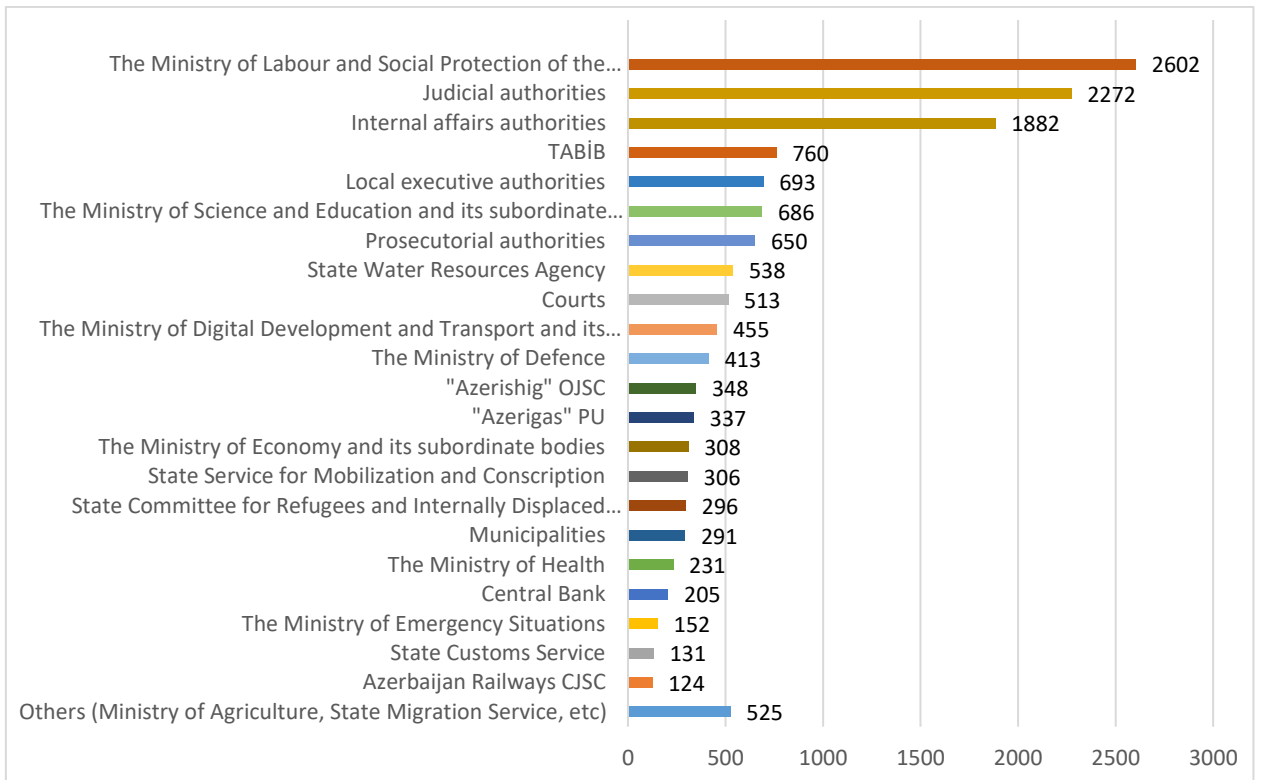


Note: The data for 2020 covers the period (July- December) from the launch of the Call Center on 20 July 2020.

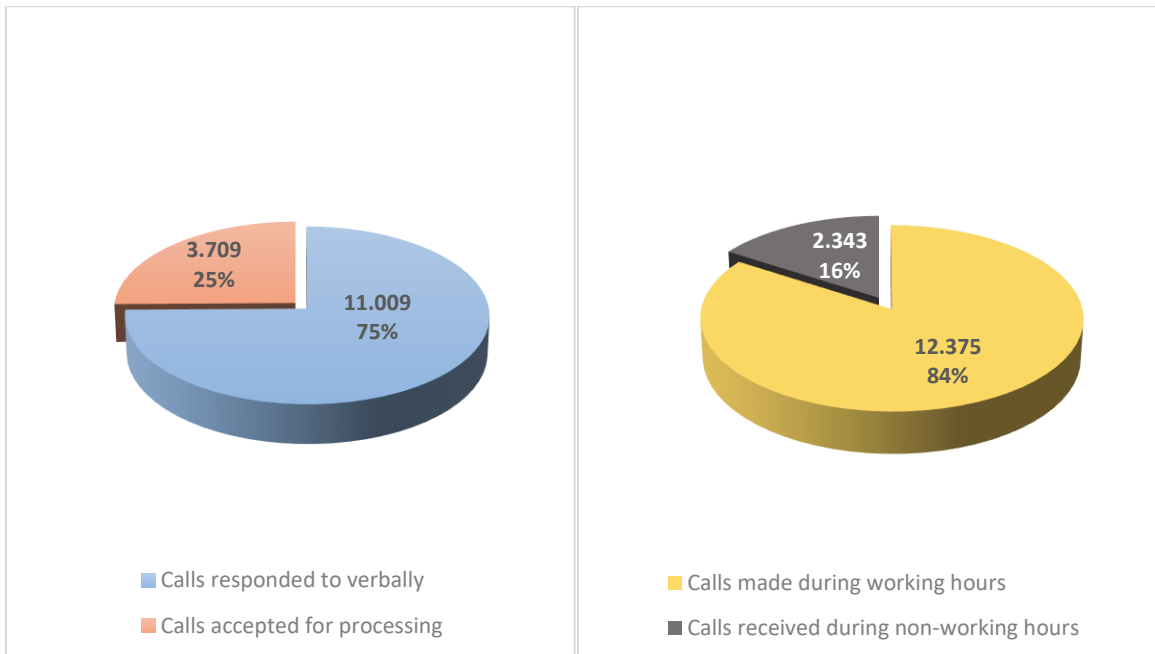
Monthly statistics of calls received by the Ombudsman's Call Center in 2025



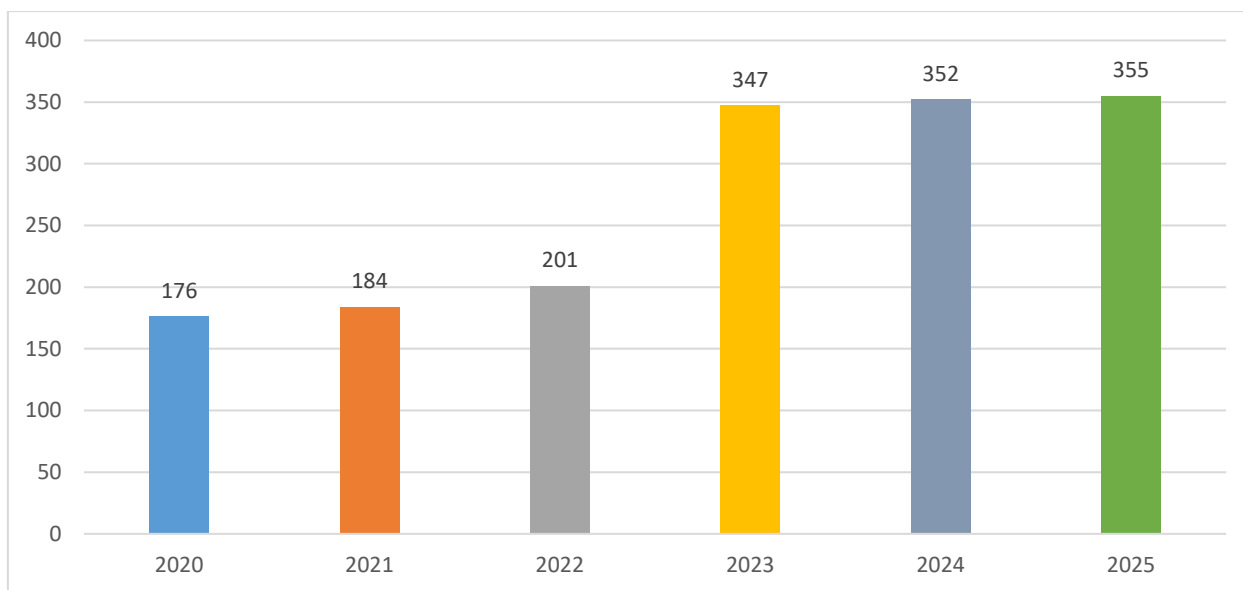
Statistics of calls received by the Ombudsman's Call Center in 2025 by institution



Other statistical data on calls received by the Ombudsman's Call Center in 2025

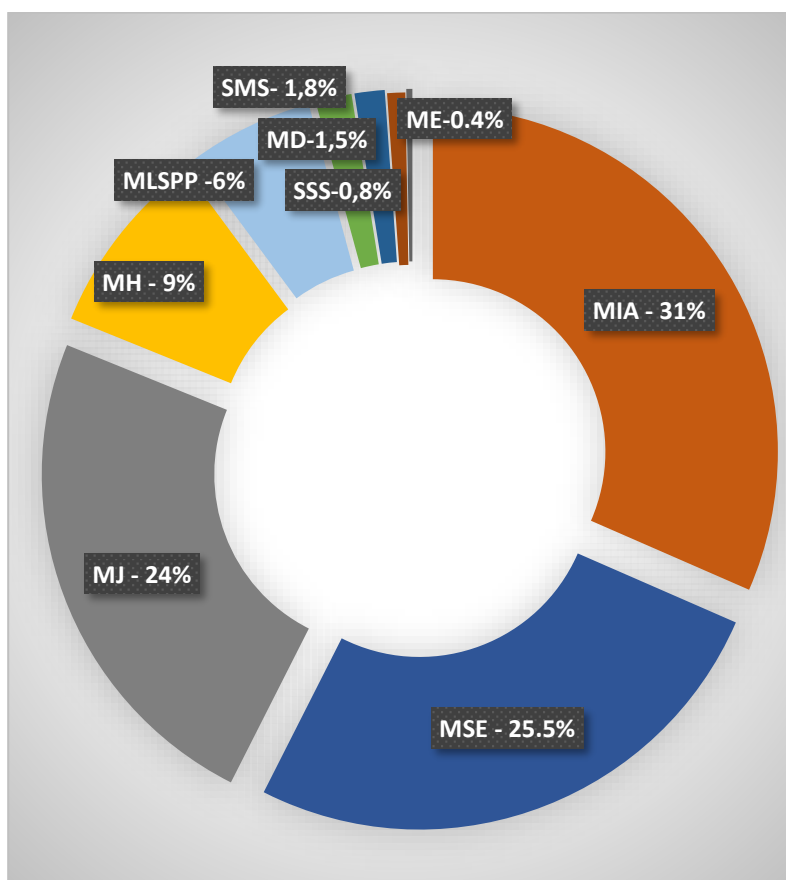


Comparative statistics of visits conducted during 2020-2025 within the framework of the Ombudsman's National Preventive Mechanism to places where persons cannot leave at their own free will

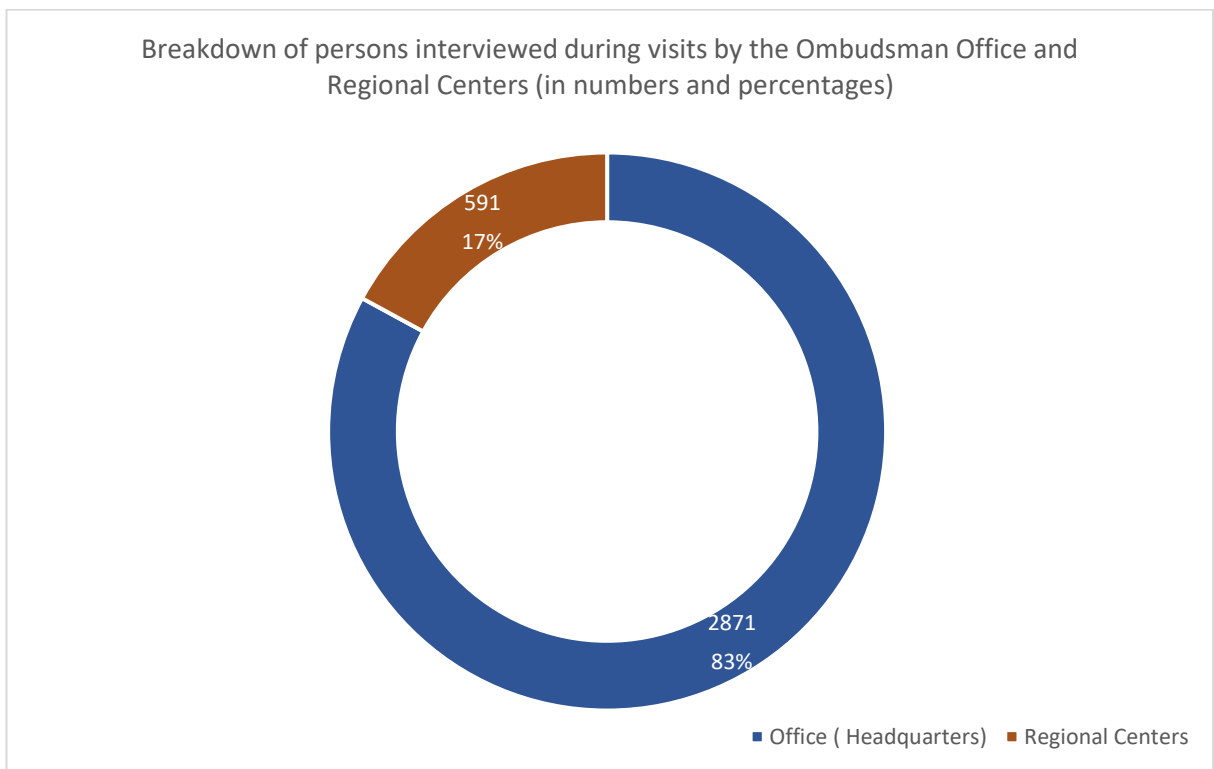
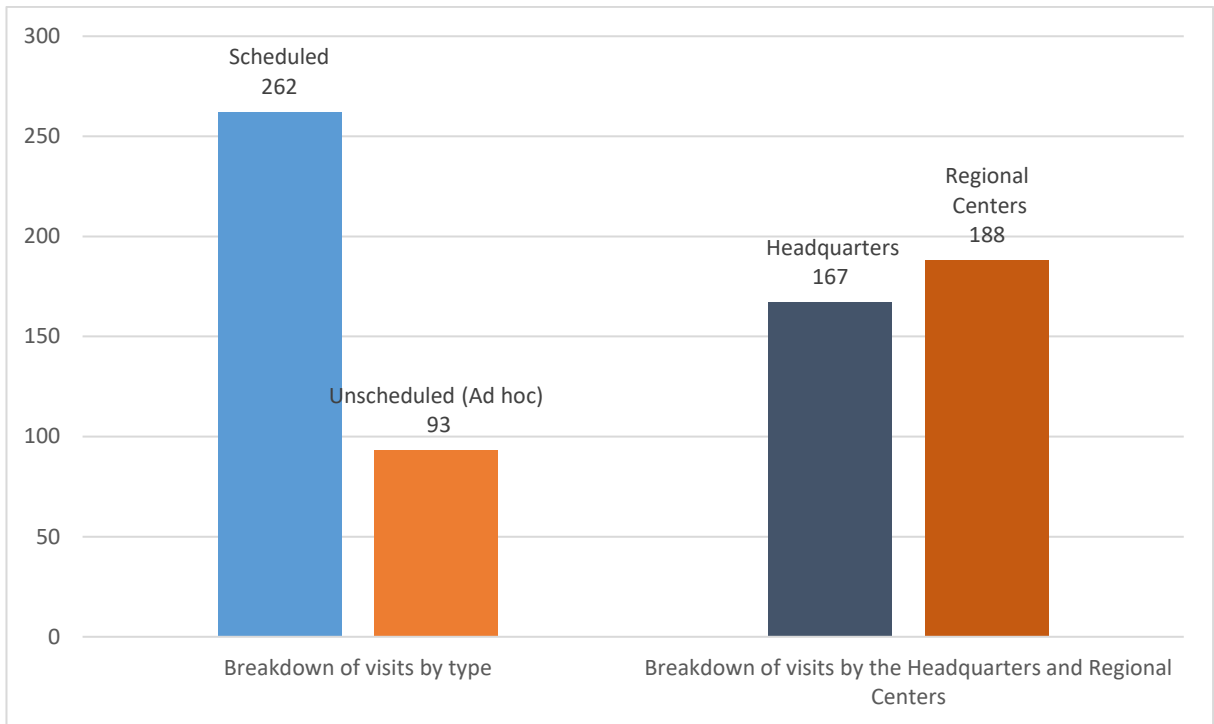


Visits conducted in 2025 within the framework of the Ombudsman's National Preventive Mechanism to places where persons cannot leave at their own free will under the authority of relevant state bodies

Public Institutions	Numbers
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)	112
Ministry of Science and Education (MSE)	92
Ministry of Justice (MJ)	84
Ministry of Health (MH)	31
Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP)	21
State Migration Service (SMS)	6
Ministry of Defense (MD)	5
State Security Service (SSS)	3
Ministry of Economy (ME)	1



Other statistical data on visits conducted in 2025 within the framework of the Ombudsman's National Preventive Mechanism to places where persons cannot leave at their own free will



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