

3.8.2. Situation of women in the North Caucasus

3.8.2. Situation of women in the North Caucasus

In the North Caucasus, women face ‘pervasive gender-based violence’,634 including ‘honour killings’635 and early636 and forced marriages.’637 According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, these practices are particularly reported in Chechnya and Dagestan.638 As reported by NGO Equality Now in October 2024, the majority of early marriages in the North Caucasus remain unregistered, with families involved in cases of kidnapping, rape, or forced marriage prioritising ‘familial and clan honour’ and relying on traditional mediation by imams, who ‘continue to officiate marriage involving minors.’639 In 2021, child marriages affected 4 453 girls and 614 boys under the age of 18, with the highest number of cases reported in Dagestan and the Stavropol region.640

As noted by Caucasian Knot, in the North Caucasus, women whose behaviour is viewed as bringing ‘a disgrace to their family’ may become victims of ‘honour killings,’ committed by their relatives, most often fathers or brothers.641 ‘Disgrace’ usually refers to sexual conduct forbidden in the culture of the region, such as adultery, pre-marital sex, rape, or homosexual relations. However, complaining about a physically abusive husband or ‘improper behaviour’ in daily life activities, including choice of clothing, can likewise lead to ‘honour killing.’642 In an interview with the EUAA, OVD-Info noted that ‘honour killings’ mostly concern women who try to flee domestic violence.643

In December 2023, Caucasian Knot reported that out of 31 convictions for the killings of women in Chechnya in 2022 – 2023, 22 were ‘honour killings’, as the text of the court ruling referred to such terms ‘immoral behaviour’, ‘shame,’ ‘honour’, ‘reputation’, and ‘according to our traditions.’644 In February 2025, a Chechen man who in 2024 killed his 22-year-old daughter-in-law justifying the killing during the investigation by her ‘immoral behaviour’ reportedly signed a military contract to fight in Ukraine.645 Media sources reported prevalence of domestic violence against women646 and occurrence of ‘honour killings’ in Ingushetia.647 Regarding Dagestan, experts consulted by Caucasian Knot in October 2025 noted that ‘honour killings’ there are rare but not exceptional cases. Moreover, the experts stated that the scale and dynamics of ‘honour killings’ in the North Caucasus is impossible to assess due to a lack of official statistics, as the authorities either do not record such crimes or conceal them.648 Marianna Muravyeva similarly noted that the Russian authorities do not speak about ‘honour killings.’649

While domestic violence in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan ‘affects women of all ages,’ it is mainly women under 30 who try to flee their families.650 As noted by Caucasian Knot, fleeing is often ‘the only chance to save their lives’ for women facing domestic violence. Many women leave the North Caucasus for other parts of Russia, while others leave the country.651 As noted by a lawyer, interviewed by RFE/RL service Kavkaz.Realii in June 2023, women should cut all ties with their families to protect themselves from ‘honour killings.’652

As noted by Marianna Muravyeva, many women flee to nearby regions, particularly to the city of Rostov-on-Don, the closest city to the North Caucasus. The expert further noted that ‘many cases’ of ‘honour killings’ originate from Rostov-on-Don courts, since men travel there to find and punish their wives and daughters who have defied family order. Many women hide from their families, with their situation becoming particularly dangerous if they take their children with them. In Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, women often leave their children behind to survive. Those who flee with children, particularly if they are boys and in cases of fleeing from Chechnya, ‘have no chance of survival’,653 as in the North Caucasus, the children are considered to belong to the father’s family.654

As noted by Caucasian Knot, the authorities and security forces in the North Caucasus often ‘take the side of family aggressors,’655 particularly in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya, whereas in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia, as reported in November 2023, law enforcement was reportedly ‘less involved in persecuting victims of domestic violence.’656

In Chechnya, under the rule of Ramzan Kadyrov, as noted by Mediazona, domestic violence has been ‘effectively institutionalised,’ with the authorities encouraging ‘the idea that women’s lives must be strictly controlled by male relatives’ and using the notion of family honour to justify violence toward women, including ‘honour killings.’657 According to the head of the ‘Fathers and Daughters’ project Aida Mirmaksumova, cited by Caucasus Knot, mistrust remains a main factor preventing women in Chechnya from seeking help.658

A lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues noted to the EUAA that the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) exists in Dagestan.659 No further information within the reference period of the report could be found regarding the scale of this practice.

In October 2025, Novaya Gazeta noted that ‘cases of Chechen women who have fled domestic violence or arranged marriages being coerced or forcibly returned home are not uncommon.’660 OVD-Info noted that they have documented several cases where women were abducted and forcefully returned to Chechnya and Dagestan.661 According to a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, forced returns of young women perceived as exhibiting transgressive behaviour to Chechnya are usually organised by family members and typically involve deception and physical violence. In some cases, relatives, with the assistance of law-enforcement authorities, confiscate their identity documents; if a woman manages to leave home and attempts to obtain new documents, law enforcement notify her family and hand the documents over to ‘a male relative or senior women’ in the family.662

In August 2023, a Chechen woman was abducted in St. Petersburg, where she had fled to avoid a forced marriage in 2022, and forcibly returned to her family in Chechnya,663 with the assistance of law enforcement officials.664 In June 2025, the MoI placed her on the list of

missing persons, with human rights defenders presuming she was killed in a ‘honour killing’ ‘for her disobedience.’665 In July 2025, a 24-year-old Chechen woman who fled ‘abusive and controlling’ family was reportedly ‘briefly abducted’ in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, where she was staying under ‘the protective order,’ ‘by her sister and five other people’, identified as Chechens.666 With the help of women rights organisations, the woman was reportedly able to escape again.667

In October 2025, a 23-year-old668 Chechen woman who fled to Armenia to escape domestic violence was found dead in Yerevan669 in a suspected ‘honour killing.’670 Women rights activists reported that she went missing after going out to meet a woman she had befriended on Instagram, whose followers included people close to Ramzan Kadyrov.671 Like many other Chechens who have fled Chechnya, she reportedly had been receiving treats.672

- 634

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova 15 September 2025, url, para. 131

- 635

  OC Media, Rallies in support of Seda Suleymanova held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 10 March 2025, url; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova 15 September 2025, url, para. 131; Marianna Muravyeva, Online Interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025; OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 22 October 2025

- 636

  Caucasian Knot, Researchers discuss early and forced marriages in Northern Caucasus, 1 June 2024, url; Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, url, p. 5

- 637

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova 15 September 2025, url, para. 131; Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online Interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

- 638

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova 15 September 2025, url, para. 131

- 639

Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, url, p. 42

- 640

  Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, url, p. 23

- 641

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, url

- 642

  Caucasian Knot, «Убийства чести» на Северном Кавказе [‘Honour killings’ in the North Caucasus], 24 October 2025, url

- 643

  OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 22 October 2025

- 644

  Caucasian Knot, Домашнее насилие на Северном Кавказе: отчет по результатам мониторинга ситуации в регионе и анализа судебной практики [Domestic violence in the North Caucasus: report on the results of monitoring the situation in the region and analysis of judicial practice], 29 December 2025, url

- 645

  Caucasian Knot, Rights defenders assess chances of justice for young woman assassinated in Chechnya, 15 February 2025, url; OC Media, Russian army conscripts man who murdered daughter-in-law in Chechnya, 14 February 2025, url

- 646

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights defenders treat report on victims of domestic violence in Northern Caucasus as relevant, 18 November 2023, url; RFE/RL, Woman Who Fled Ingushetia Over Domestic Violence Detained in Armenia,’ 16 November 2023, url; Moscow Times (The), Chechen Woman Who Fled Abusive Family Briefly Detained in Georgia, Activists Say, 14 July 2025, url

- 647

  Kavkaz.Realii, “"Он говорил, что будет резать меня на куски". История бежавшей от "убийства чести" матери из Ингушетии” [‘He said he would cut me into pieces.’ The story of a mother from Ingushetia who fled from ‘honour killing’], 31 June 2023, url

- 648

Caucasian Knot, «Убийства чести» на Северном Кавказе [‘Honour killings’ in the North Caucasus], 24 October 2025, url

- 649

  Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

- 650

  Caucasian Knot, Rights defenders issue report on domestic violence victims in Northern Caucasus, 14 November 2023, url; Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, url

- 651

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, url

- 652

  Kavkaz.Realii, “"Он говорил, что будет резать меня на куски". История бежавшей от "убийства чести" матери из Ингушетии” [‘He said he would cut me into pieces.’ The story of a mother from Ingushetia who fled from ‘honour killing’], 31 June 2023, url

- 653

  Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

- 654

  RFE/RL, In Russian Region, Muslim Women Lose Child Custody After Remarrying, 28 January 2025, url

- 655

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, url

- 656

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights defenders treat report on victims of domestic violence in Northern Caucasus as relevant, 18 November 2023, url

- 657

  Mediazona, When borders fail to protect. Missing Chechen woman Aishat Baimuradova found dead in Yerevan, 20 October 2025, url

- 658

Caucasian Knot, Rights defenders assess chances of justice for young woman assassinated in Chechnya, 15 February 2025, url

- 659

Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

- 660

Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman who fled abusive family in Russia found dead in Armenian capital Yerevan, 20 October 2025, url

- 661

OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 22 October 2025

- 662

Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Email correspondence with EUAA, 20 November 2025

- 663

OC Media, Rallies in support of Seda Suleymanova held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 10 March 2025 url; Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman feared dead in honour killing declared missing nearly 2 years after disappearance, 16 June 2025, url

- 664

OC Media, Rallies in support of Seda Suleymanova held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 10 March 2025, url

- 665

Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman feared dead in honour killing declared missing nearly 2 years after disappearance, 16 June 2025, url

- 666

Moscow Times (The), Chechen Woman Who Fled Abusive Family Briefly Detained in Georgia, Activists Say, 14 July 2025, url

- 667

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova 15 September 2025, url, para. 131

- 668

Mediazona, When borders fail to protect. Missing Chechen woman Aishat Baimuradova found dead in Yerevan, 20 October 2025, url

- 669

  Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman who fled abusive family in Russia found dead in Armenian capital Yerevan, 20 October 2025, url

- 670

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, url

- 671

  Mediazona, When borders fail to protect. Missing Chechen woman Aishat Baimuradova found dead in Yerevan, 20 October 2025, url; Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman who fled abusive family in Russia found dead in Armenian capital Yerevan, 20 October 2025, url

- 672

  Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu