

Statement Regarding the Inefficiency of the Investigation of the Case on the Use of Violence and Obstruction of Professional Activities of Journalists Injured during the Dispersal of the Protests in July 2016

July 28, 2017

One year ago, in the early morning of July 30, 2016, the two-week dramatic events related to the capture of the RA Police Patrol-Guard Service Regiment by “Sasna Tsrer” armed group on Khorenatsi Street of Yerevan, reached their peak. As a result of actions taken by the authorities, the members of the armed group surrendered, and the continuing anti-government protests were put down through the use of tear gas, flash-bang grenades and other special means.

During the dispersal 27 reporters and cameramen from various media outlets also became the target of the law-enforcers and their supporters in civilian clothing: 19 of them were subjected to physical violence, and 8 persons faced other obstructions of their professional activities. This was coupled with deliberate smashing or damaging of the media representatives’ photo and video cameras, seizing the memory cards, destroying the footage, etc.

The criminal case filed on these incidents has been going on for already one year, and the fact that during the investigation 21 reporters and cameramen were recognized as victims, but only 9 persons were charged, proves that the measures undertaken by Special Investigation Service are inconsistent with the scale of violence committed. Thus, over the past 8 months only one person has been charged: this also speaks of the unacceptable inefficiency of the investigation. Whereas, the videos on the Internet and in the archives of the media evidently show several dozens of perpetrators committing violence.

We, the undersigned, recalling the apology made by the RA President to the journalists in relation to the July 2016 events, demand from the authorities to be impartial, conduct a proper investigation and subject to liability all the perpetrators, regardless of the positions they hold. Otherwise, we will have to state, that an attempt is made in Armenia to conceal even the cases of large-scale violence against journalists and obstructions of their activities.

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