

## **Statement Regarding the Arrest of Levon Barseghian, Board Chairman of “Asparez” Journalists’ Club**

July 28, 2016

On July 27, 2016, at about 3.30 after the mass rally on Khorenatsi street in Yerevan, one of its active participants Levon Barseghian, Board Chairman of Gyumri “Asparez” Journalists’ Club, was taken to Shengavit Department of RA Police. Subsequently a criminal case was instituted against Levon Barseghian on suspicion of carrying a cold weapon. He was arrested and underwent forensic medical examination.

Levon Barseghian’s whereabouts remained unknown to his colleagues and relatives for a long time. Although the police informed that he had been released at 6.30, in reality it was disinformation. Barseghian was kept in police custody: he had been taken to Gyumri Kumayri Department and once again transferred to Shengavit Investigation Department. Only thanks to the persistent efforts of our colleagues, human rights activists, was his whereabouts discovered in the afternoon.

The ground for instituting a criminal case against Levon Barseghian was the folding knife found in the pocket of his pants. According to his lawyer, it is not the first time that this knife is found on Levon Barseghian in similar situations, when the police detain him from protest actions. However, each time the existence of that knife was recorded and ignored, since it did not constitute a cold weapon.

We, the undersigned, are convinced that the criminal case instituted against our colleague, is fabricated and the existence of a knife, defined as a cold weapon, is a mere pretext to “punish” Levon Barseghian for his vigorous civic activity, as well as for participating in the protests on Khorenatsi street and for moderating the latest rally. In fact, our colleague became a targeted victim of the arbitrary actions of law enforcement bodies for his civic stance.

Based on the above-mentioned, we demand from:

- The law enforcement agencies to immediately quash the criminal case and release Levon Barseghian;
- The ruling political elite to end violence against the protesters and civic activists, and to make the law-enforcers act lawfully.

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