

Statement Regarding the Cases of Violence against the Journalists, Covering the Elections

February 20, 2013

On February 18, on the voting day of RA presidential elections, attempts to harass and impede the activities of journalists were observed. Particularly, at about 16.00 at the 17/5 precinct of Artashat, Ararat region, an incident occurred with the journalist Artak Hambardzumian, representative of “Journalists for Human Rights” NGO. Some unknown men pinioned the journalist’s arms and took him aside so that he has no possibility to record the ballot stuffing. Over 19.00, at Khorenatsi street of Yerevan, a group of people, standing at the electoral headquarters of the presidential candidate, incumbent President Serzh Sargsian, prohibited the entry of Marineh Kharatian, correspondent of “1in.am” news portal, and Gayaneh Saribekian, correspondent of “Hraparak” daily. Afterwards, they took away the video and photo cameras from the journalists and forced them to leave.

These facts come to prove once again that whenever there are political tensions in Armenia, the pressure and violence against media, as a rule, exacerbate. The state authorities, especially the law enforcement bodies, usually overlook such kinds of incidents and instead of revealing and punishing the insulters, they come up with strange “arguments” for withdrawing the cases. Meanwhile, impunity leads to new transgressions.

We, the undersigned, express our concern regarding the cases of violence against the journalists, who covered the elections, and demand the authorities to take immediate measures for conducting a thorough and objective investigation and bring the insulters to account.

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
YEREVAN PRESS CLUB
INTERNEWS MEDIA SUPPORT NGO
“ASPAREZ” JOURNALISTS CLUB
MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE-ARMENIA
“JOURNALISTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS” NGO
GORIS PRESS CLUB
“JOURNALISTS FOR THE FUTURE” NGO
“ECOLUR” NGO
HELSINKI COMMITTEE OF ARMENIA
VANAZDOR OFFICE OF HELSINKI CITIZEN’S ASSEMBLY
“RULE OF LAW” NGO
“YERASHKHIK” CIVIL SOCIETY CENTER
“PUBLIC INFORMATION AND NEED OF KNOWLEDGE” NGO
“AGAT” NGO