

## **Statement Regarding the Violations of the Rights of Media Representatives Covering the December 6, 2015 Referendum on Amendments to the RA Constitution**

December 7, 2015

On December 6, 2015, on the day of the conduct of referendum on the amendments to the RA Constitution, numerous cases of violations (physical assaults, impeding the legitimate professional activities of journalists) of the rights of media representatives covering the voting process were recorded.

Unfortunately, what had been taking place many times in Armenia was repeated again: during elections and referendums the number of attacks and pressure on journalists increases for the latter can spoil the game of those, who act indiscriminately to ensure “victory” through the bribery of voters, fraud and abuses. As usual district thugs were involved for that purpose.

As a result, according to the preliminary data of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, on December 6, violence was exerted on two media representatives (Rafael Afrikian, iLur.am, and Eduard Avetisian, “Asparez” daily). Another 13 faced various types of obstruction of their professional activities. The most repellent of these cases was the behavior of a woman that came out from the “Yes” campaign headquarters, located on 56 Komitas avenue, Yerevan. Blocking the way, she shoved the correspondent of Armenian Service of Radio “Liberty” and spat at her.

The territorial subdivisions of the RA Prosecutor’s Office sent the media publications and the human rights organizations’ reports to relevant police departments to prepare materials for investigation. However, practice and experience show that these steps, as a rule, are a sheer formality without any legal consequences. A vivid example of this is the criminal case initiated in relation to the June 23, 2015 Baghramyan avenue events in Yerevan: around half year later there is still no one accused or suspected of violence against journalists.

We, the undersigned, express our outrage over the cases of violence against journalists and obstruction of their work and demand:

- The ruling party, initiator of the referendum, to provide clarifications to the Armenian society on the attacks and obstacles against journalists;
- The RA Police and investigative bodies to carry out a thorough and impartial investigation of all the recorded cases, refraining from attempts to imitate efforts;
- The Prosecutor’s Office to ensure proper control over the actions of the above mentioned law enforcement bodies and to be consistent in disclosing the violators of journalists’ rights and subjecting them to liability.

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION  
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