

Statement Regarding the Cases of Obstruction of Professional Activities of Journalists During the Elections to Yerevan Council of Elders in 2017

May 14, 2017

On May 14, 2017, during the elections to Yerevan Council of Elders two cases of violence and four cases of obstruction of professional activities of journalists were recorded.

Sisak Gabrielyan, correspondent of Armenian Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, was attacked at the electoral headquarters of Republican Party of Armenia, located on Nar-Dos street of Yerevan: he was shoved and hit (*hereinafter references are provided to the video materials on the incidents, published on Aravot.am on May 14, 2017*).

Tatev Khachatryan, correspondent of Armtimes.com, was subjected to violence in the precinct 10/29, based at school № 64 of Erebuni administrative district of Yerevan. Her professional activities were also obstructed in the precinct 7/46 of Malatia-Sebastia district of Yerevan. In the same precinct pressure was exerted on Hripsimeh Jebejyan, correspondent of Aravot.am.

Obstructions to professional activities were faced by Mariam Grigoryan, correspondent of 1in.am, in the precinct 10/28 of Erebuni district, and Sona Adamyan, correspondent of Hraparak.am, in the precinct 2/50, based at the State College of Trade in Nor-Nork 2nd micro-district of Yerevan.

Similar incidents were recorded not only on the day of voting, but also during the electoral campaign: pressure was exerted on Nelly Grigoryan, correspondent of Aravot.am, and Anna Zakharyan, correspondent of “Haykakan Zhamanak” daily.

Following the vicious tradition, these elections were also marked by the increase in cases of attacks on journalists, which limited their ability to cover that event of public importance freely and without hindrance.

While during the April 2, 2017 parliamentary elections the law-enforcement bodies reacted immediately to such incidents, starting investigative actions, this time they have not demonstrated appropriate efficiency yet. The experience of the previous years does not offer hope that those violating the rights of journalists will be subjected to liability.

We, the undersigned, demand from:

- RA Police and competent investigative bodies to objectively examine the facts regarding violence and obstructions of journalists’ professional activities, and institute criminal cases on these grounds;
- RA Prosecutor’s Office to exercise due control so that all those guilty are disclosed and subjected to liability.

The authorities’ actions regarding these incidents will be in the focus of our attention. We will continue to protect the rights of injured journalists, informing the Armenian public and international community about the developments around the above-mentioned incidents.

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