

Statement Regarding the Cases of Violence and Obstruction of Professional Activities of Journalists on the Day of Parliamentary Elections of April 2, 2017

April 3, 2017

On April 2, 2017, on the RA National Assembly elections voting day, 10 cases of violence, pressure and obstruction of professional activities of journalists were recorded.

Sisak Gabrielyan, correspondent of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Armenian Service, Shoghik Galstyan, Araratnews.am correspondent, and Hayk Petrosyan, Araratnews.am cameraman, were attacked near parliamentary candidate from Republican Party of Armenia Hakob Beglaryan's electoral headquarters, based on 15 Rustaveli str. in Kond district of Yerevan. In the precinct 9/29, based in the same area, the activities of Tirayr Muradyan, Armtimes.com correspondent, were obstructed, and in the vicinity of Hakob Beglaryan's another electoral headquarters, in Noragyugh, Armineh Avetisyan, Newsbook.am correspondent, was subjected to pressure: stones were thrown at her, she was threatened to be stabbed. Kristineh Poghosyan, another correspondent of Newsbook.am, was threatened and sworn at in the precinct 10/3 of Sari Tagh district of Yerevan.

Various obstructions and pressure were faced by Grisha Balasanyan, Hetq.am correspondent, in the precinct 14/20 of Echmiadzin, Ani Gevorgyan, Tert.am correspondent, in the precinct 12/35 of Shahumyan village, Ararat region, Narineh Ghalechyan, correspondent of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Armenian Service, in the precinct 20/24 of Tchambarak village, Gegharkunik region, Narek Kirakosyan, Armtimes.com correspondent, in the precinct 32/31 of Gyumri, and Lusineh Shahbazyan, News.am correspondent, in the precinct 6/01 of Yerevan.

A vicious tradition has been set in Armenia: domestic political tensions, especially during national elections, are followed by attacks and pressure on the media and journalists. In this regard, April 2 did not become an exception, in spite of the authorities' promises to conduct the elections at an appropriate level.

We, the undersigned, take note of the fact that the law-enforcement bodies are carrying out investigative actions on some of the above-mentioned incidents. However, the undertaken actions carry little credibility, for in the previous years in a number of such incidents those guilty have not been disclosed and subjected to liability, and the criminal cases, even if instituted, have been quashed on the ground of "absence of corpus delicti".

Taking into account the above-mentioned, we demand from:

- RA Police and competent investigative bodies to objectively examine the facts regarding violence and obstructions of journalists' 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.

While continuing to protect the rights of injured journalists, we will carefully follow the developments and inform the public about them.

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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