

Statement Regarding the New Draft of the Amendments to the Criminal Code

28 February 2020, Yerevan

The new draft of the amendments to the Criminal Code posted on the official website e-draft.am by the Ministry of Justice raised serious concerns among the journalistic circles. In particular, Article 443 relating to filing a false police report prescribes liability, including imprisonment for publishing false information on a criminal case or commission of a crime by someone in the media.

We, the undersigned organisations, note the clarifications provided by the Ministry to the effect that the purpose of the said amendments was not targeting the media or journalists. Nevertheless, we state that transposing the crime of filing a false police report to the field of the media is an innovation unused in the past (it does not exist in the current Criminal Code) and not necessary at present, which can threaten seriously freedom of expression and impede media activity. Moreover, this will have a “chilling effect” on the media sources to impart confidential information on cases of public importance. Finally, even if a media outlet publishes false information on a criminal case or the commission of a crime by someone, this issue can be resolved by means of civil law regulations through liability for defamation rather than criminal prosecution.

Considering the aforesaid, we demand that the authors of the draft refrain from transposing the problem of filing a false police report to the field of the media and remove from Article 443 the wording “... or publication of similar information in the mass media.”

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

MEDIA INITIATIVES CENTER

JOURNALISTS' CLUB “ASPAREZ”

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER

MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE – ARMENIA

PUBLIC JOURNALISM CLUB

JOURNALISTS FOR THE FUTURE

JOURNALISTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

GORIS PRESS CLUB

SUPREMACY OF LAW