

## **Statement Regarding the Attack Against Irakanum.am Editor Paylak Fahradyan by the RA Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan**

19 March 2021, Yerevan

Yesterday, on 18 March, Hakob Arshakyan, RA Minister for High Technologies exerted violence on Paylak Fahradyan, editor of the website [www.irakanum.am](http://www.irakanum.am) in one of Yerevan cafes. Paylak Fahradyan had earlier approached the Minister and inquired why he was in a cafe during working hours. According to press publications, the conversation was unethical on both sides, following which the Minister punched the journalist and damaged his computer and cellphone.

It is really unprecedented for a Minister to resort to fists in his dealings with a journalist. This is yet another incident of extreme tension, mutual intolerance and indecent behaviour between the authorities and media workers. We have recorded such examples in the National Assembly and during many public events. High-ranking officials and politicians must be ready to appear in the focus of attention of the public and the media and demonstrate restraint in respect of the questions addressed to them. We would like to stress that journalists, in their turn, must abide by the law and standards of professional ethics.

We have all grounds to regard this incident as a result of inadequate response of the authorities to previous similar incidents. We find it surprising that some of Hakob Arshakyan's team members are trying to make public statements and comments directly or indirectly justifying the incident of violence.

We, the undersigned media organisations, believe that exerting violence on journalists is impermissible and demand that:

- The Government and the Civil Contract party publicly condemn the Minister's behaviour, examine the question of whether he should continue to remain in office and provide safeguards for the prevention of similar incidents in the future.
- The law enforcement authorities examine the details of the incident and provide a legal assessment thereof.

We call on journalists to avoid provocative attitude in dealings with public officials and politicians, in particular in cases when this does not contribute to the accomplishment of the journalistic mission of imparting objective information to the public.

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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