

## Statement Regarding the Discriminatory and Abusive Treatment of Journalists

24 February 2021, Yerevan

On 23 February the media workers from *Radio Liberty* covering the events during a march following the protest act staged by the opposition forces were attacked in Yerevan. A group of protesters insulted and swore at them, threatened with closure of the radio station. Following this, some protesters started hitting journalist Artak Khulyan and cameraman Karen Chilingaryan and damaged the camera.

On the same day, during the police action in respect of the protesters the cameraman of the website *Sputnik Armenia*, Aram Nersisyan was punched. Earlier during the demonstration on 20 February again Radio Liberty was targeted. Narek Samsonyan, representative of the opposition obstructed the activities of the media outlet, and when the correspondent of the radio station applied to the policemen standing there, the latter showed indifference and inaction.

We have recorded cases in the course of the last months when the representatives of the authorities and their proponents demonstrated discriminatory and insulting attitude to journalists, targeting the opposition media workers.

We condemn the spreading of reciprocal hatred. Believing that this is unacceptable we are convinced that the responsibility for any aggression in respect of the media workers lies with the organisers of demonstrations and marches, which inculcate intolerance in respect of 'not their own' media outlets. A vivid example of the aforesaid is the incident with Radio Liberty: the opposition has for quite a while inspired distrust towards this media outlet among its proponents telling them that it works in the interest of Pashinyan's government.

We, the undersigned media organisations note that this does not contribute to public mobilisation, which is of utmost importance today. And since the mass protests tend to continue, we demand that:

- The RA Police take measures to prevent any obstruction of the media activity, detect the participants of the above incidents who have exerted violence and hold them liable, as well as hold official inquiries to assess the lawfulness of the actions taken;
- The organisers of the opposition protests send clear messages to their proponents and followers on the impermissibility of any aggression and intolerance in respect of the media, irrespective of their political orientation.

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

CENTER FOR MEDIA INITIATIVES

JOURNALISTS' CLUB 'ASPAREZ'

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER

MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE – ARMENIA

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