**Statement Regarding the violence used by law enforcement officers against the employee of “Aravot” daily newspaper in Tavush**

**25 April 2024, Yerevan**

On April 23, 2024, in Armenia’s Tavush region, clashes erupted between the citizens who deemed the process of border demarcation with Azerbaijan unacceptable and staged a protest on the Bagratashen-Ayrum road and the police. During this turmoil, the police obstructed the legitimate professional activities of Garik Melkonyan, an employee of “Aravot” daily. In particular, upon noticing that their actions were being filmed, the law-enforcement officers approached the media representative, and one of them hit Garik Melkonyan’s hand causing his phone to fall and break. The entire incident can be seen in the video disseminated by the media.

We, the undersigned journalistic organizations, highlight that during the use of force against protesters, cases of the police targeting, attacking and resorting to violence against media personnel carrying out their duties on site have become commonplace. Moreover, these illegal actions, as a rule, remain unpunished.

Vehemently condemning these actions of the police, we demand:

• the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to immediately conduct an internal probe to identify and hold accountable the officers who have abused their powers, as well as eliminate any hindrances to the legitimate activities of media representatives. We also urge that police officers receive an explanation regarding the importance of reporting in such challenging situations, and the potential impact of law enforcers’ actions on journalistic work, impartiality, and the public’s right to information;

• the RA Government, to initiate a discussion regarding the issues of proportionality of actions of security structures during mass demonstrations, including violations of journalists’ rights, and make necessary decisions to improve the situation.

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

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**MEDIA INITIATIVES CENTER**

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER**

**JOURNALISTS’ CLUB “ASPAREZ”**

**MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE-ARMENIA**

**PUBLIC JOURNALISM CLUB**

**“JOURNALISTS FOR THE FUTURE” NGO**

**“JOURNALISTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS” NGO**

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