**Statement Regarding the “Global Media Forum” Held in Shushi**

**23 July 2024, Yerevan**

Azerbaijan, occupying the lowest places in international rankings for democracy and freedom of press, held for the second time (the first event took place a year ago) the so-called “Global Media Forum” in Shushi on July 20-22, 2024. The event, which was attended by Azerbaijani president, was themed “Unmasking False Narratives: Confronting Disinformation.”

There is perhaps nothing surprising that such events are organized by a country like Azerbaijan, where numerous journalists are imprisoned on fabricated charges, persecuted and forced to migrate to escape the real threats from the authoritarian regime. After all, such “forums” constitute attempts and means for the regime to mask the bitter reality. What is ridiculous, however, is when representatives from international organizations and media with a certain reputation and authority participate in these events in any capacity. By participating and offering compliments, these individuals, who seemingly disregard the years of sharp criticism their own entities have directed at Azerbaijan, contribute to these “forums” turning into platforms for messages to whitewash official Baku.

The topic of the “forum” was even more ridiculous, given that the Aliyev regime itself actively encourages the spread of false narratives and disinformation.

If the praise and adulation towards Aliyev during the event were somewhat anticipated, for instance, from notable figures of Russian propaganda outlets, the same attitude from Western attendees is, to say the least, incomprehensible. None of the latter dared to voice any criticism or ask Aliyev a sharp question on the state of the press in Azerbaijan, repression of journalists, political prisoners, let alone the depopulation of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh carried out by Baku.

We, the undersigned organizations, declare that this practice is contrary to the principles of impartial and responsible journalism.

We call on international journalistic and human rights organizations, along with leading global media:

* to assess the negative impact of the “forum” held in Shushi on democratic values;
* review the attitude towards it and the principles of participation;
* exclude hypocrisy that is incompatible with the profession.

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

**YEREVAN PRESS CLUB**

**MEDIA INITIATIVES CENTER**

**MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE-ARMENIA**

**PUBLIC JOURNALISM CLUB**

**JOURNALISTS’ CLUB “ASPAREZ”**

**“JOURNALISTS FOR THE FUTURE” NGO**

**“JOURNALISTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS” NGO**

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