



OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
PUBLIC RELATIONS UNIT



The Human Rights Defender's observations on the recent events taking place in the country

Fulfilling its constitution mission to guarantee and safeguard human rights the Human Rights Defender contributes to the effective functioning of the country's entire system on human rights protection. The latter assumes that democratic developments, taking place in the country, are one of the fundamental issues under the Defender's consideration.

The Human Rights Defender fulfils the named mission by virtue of his constitutional status and guided by the fundamental principles of impartiality and political neutrality.

Recent developments in the country are under due consideration of the Defender. The study of the latter situation in the country emphasizes the necessity to publicly express the Human Rights Defender's position on them, which are:

1. During the democratic developments in the country in April-May of the current year, citizens of Armenia, exercising their free will, had an opportunity to make fundamental changes that directly concerns each of us.
2. Relying on the high level of trust among citizens, the outcomes of these democratic developments should be served for putting the public power system on a solid institutional grounds. Being a fundamental guarantee of country's strength, trust of citizens is the basis of power. Everyone's mission is to make mutual efforts to strengthen and preserve the atmosphere of trust.
3. Nevertheless, it is necessary to guarantee that state power is exercised in conformity with the Constitution and the laws based on the separation and balance of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Each of these powers must respect the others and be guided only by the mandate entrusted to it. This approach will give the opportunity to direct all the efforts to the establishment of the rule of law and democracy to the qualitatively new stage of development. Any step back from the achievements must be excluded.
4. The mentioned fundamental objectives require that every process taking place in the country be unconditionally based on the rule of law. Any initiative should be based on human rights.
5. The rights and freedoms of all must be respected, and any act of unlawful interference must be prohibited. Everyone's dignity must be respected: it is indivisible, it is an indispensable basis for the rights and freedoms of each of us. This is the way to form solidarity in the society and enshrine the atmosphere of mutual respect.

6. Freedom of speech is one of the key indicators of democratic development of the country and the protection of this high value is the responsibility of everyone. This is directly linked to the promotion of dissent, that is especially necessary for our country nowadays.

7. Monitoring public posts of the recent social network users and comments, that has been conducted by the Human Rights Defender's Office has shown a significant increase of insult and hate speech.

8. The observation shows, that comments with insult, hate speech and even calls for violence are made by social network users under the posts containing criticisms towards “anyone”, especially executive authority. A detailed study indicates that they are often made based on headline or only considering the publisher's personality without getting familiar with the content of those publications. At the same time, aggression is being noticed in the comments of evidently fake accounts, number of which has been significantly increased. In the recent days significant increase of such comments addressed to the deputies of the National Assembly has been noticed and is concerning from the perspective of the society regarding deputy’s role and reputation.

It is obvious that this situation is a contributing factor for intensifying (amplifying) intolerance. It has a negative impact on the provision of solidarity in the society. Therefore, the calls of public figures to eliminate insult and hate speech are welcomed.

9. Mass media and journalists also play a considerable role in the current situation. I ask all of them to remove from their publications any comment, containing insult, hate speech or call for violence, regardless of whether they have been made by evidently fake or real user. It will significantly promote tolerance and solidarity.

10. It is necessary to completely eliminate the tendencies of dividing the society into groups (or the intentions to divide). This is totally unacceptable. This phenomenon is problematic in terms of the whole human rights protection system in the country. It can have profound negative consequences, the elimination of which will require long-term efforts.

11. Attempts to divide the society into “predecessors” and “successor” have to be ceased. It is even more dangerous when public figures and, in some cases, human rights activists conduct such separative actions. This is one of the factors, among others, that undermine solidarity and do not contribute to the strength of the state.

Any issue should be solved through dialogue, in the atmosphere of mutual respect and solidarity.

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