



**Manifestations of attitudes, hate  
speech towards LGBT people and  
the violation of their rights in the  
online environment of Armenia**

**REPORT #3**



THE NORWEGIAN  
HELSINKI COMMITTEE

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## Useful Terminology

**RA**                      **Republic of Armenia**

**LGBTI**                **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex**

**NGO**                 **Non-Governmental Organization**

**ARP**                 **Armenian Republican Party**

**NSS**                **National Security Service**

**CEI**                 **Criminal-Executive Institution**



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## **Manifestations of attitudes, hate speech towards LGBT people, and the violation of their rights in the online environment of RA**

### **Purpose**

To explore the manifestation of attitudes and hate towards LGBT people in the online environment of RA and the violation of their rights.

/ For the period of June 1- November 20, 2015/

Online environment of RA – social net and media online environment / e-press` websites, websites of television, radio, print media companies /.

### **Objectives**

Creation of complete database of records and publications subject to study

Qualitative content analysis of the collected material

Social networks- Study of the circulation of information in the online media environment

### **The objects of study are**

The online domain of RA

Subject of study is the manifestation of attitudes and hate towards LGBT people in the online environment and the violation of their rights.

### **Methods**

Qualitative and quantitative content analysis

Tools- The guidelines of qualitative and quantitative content analysis will allow creating a base for the organization of activities for the future qualitative analysis.

The detailed methodology is described in ANNEX 1



## Introduction

From June 1 to November 20, 2015 time-period, on the online environment of RA, analysis had been conducted on the manifestation of attitudes and hate towards LGBT people and the violation of their rights.

About 10 thousand publications had been studied including journalistic material, opinions – records in the social networks, opinions on the online materials, videos and recordings imposed by the media, which again had been discussed online.

Different events, that were carried out on civil, political and cultural levels, were accompanied by different hate and defensive records towards the LGBT community and explosive discussions on the social networks, websites and the media.

Scandalous headlines about the LGBT community continue to be the hits for many online media, unfortunately, often times to be in the center of attention or to stoke hatred intentionally.

This means that 85-90% of published materials on LGBT community don't illustrate their problems and no serious evidence and information is presented. They represent scandalous views or opinions of incompetent people / politicians, actors, famous people, who sometimes have no common awareness on the violation of human rights, LGBT issues, but express their opinion / unsubstantiated misinformation / information without an evidence, facts from suspicious sources, etc. /, and one of the saddest facts for a democratic country is manifestation of intentional discrimination and hate speech by the media.

It is interesting that this year NGOs dealing with human rights actively disseminate online messages, viewpoints and videos, which do not register the goodwill of media but the effective work of organizations.

The cases of violation of LGBT rights are raised online exclusively by the NGOs dealing with human rights or through their projects for media - mostly LGBTnews.am e- media website, "New Generation" humanitarian NGO, Public Information and Need for Knowledge NGO / PINK Armenia / Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office, etc.

The research conducted last year allows to make a number of comparisons / [See last year research](#)/, including indication of the key role of online news website LGBTnews.am for cases of online presentation of LGBT community problems and discrimination and disinformation of hate speech, as a counter argument to facts and source of information.





The existence of this website allows a number of citizens who are opposed to hate, discrimination, violation of rights, to present the online information, links, and thus indicating their tolerant viewpoints.

Whereas in previous years the above mentioned citizens expressed their own viewpoints on LGBT community issues with hesitation or doubt, sometimes without facts in the online environment. The site promotes finding more often materials on the tolerance towards the LGBT community, more complete information on their current problems.

Again, comparing with the previous year's survey, it must be stated that as a topic the "LGBT community" is being discussed parallel to public processes, as its integral part. On the one hand it states that the LGBT community is an integral part of society, whether it is accepted or not, and on the other hand, it means that the public processes are becoming a platform for disseminating hate speech.

Let's mention specific examples: if Eurovision was the culmination of LGBT community theme, as well as the expression of hate speech in 2014 with the victory of Conchita Wurst, then at the end of June 2015 the "Electric Yerevan" public protest against the rise in electricity price became a good opportunity to once again put into circulation LGBT community related topics, such as pros and cons opinions in the social networks on them, there was an attempt to discredit the movement, looking at LGBT participation as a "black spot", and when there appeared opinions protecting their participation and writing that they are also an integral part of the society the authors were insulted.

LGBT related intolerance was stressed also in the online environment when it became known that the "New Generation" Humanitarian organization received financial support from Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Armenia to protect the interests of LGBT people.





**On June 9 the German Embassy in Yerevan signed an agreement on financial assistance with «New Generation» humanitarian NGO.**

The support is set for " Strengthening and promotion of knowledge of rights defenders and emerging leaders in the field of protection of rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals (LMBT) in Armenia" program. This 30,000 euro worth supporting project aims to strengthen the rights of Gays, and Lesbians in Armenia- combating against discrimination and contempt of the population against them.

The following activities are aimed at the elimination of prejudice and strengthening the fundamental right of sexual minorities-the free development of personality.

The project seeks to

- set up a shelter for at least 15 LMBT homeless people providing them with protection and vital needs,
- To provide LGBT with free legal consulting and legal aid,
- Within the framework of five-day seminar, 15 human rights protectors from ten provinces of Armenia receive training in order to combat discrimination and punishment,
- During a five-day training to transfer such skills to 10 young LMBT from 10 regions of Armenia that will help them fight for the freedom and fairness of LMBT community,
- To organize two public hearings, on the situation of LMBT persons, the improvement of that situation as well as strengthening the rights of LMBT people with the participation of representatives of both Armenian and international LMBT community.

Human rights are universal and inviolable. Human rights policy, of course, includes also the rights of the LMBT persons. The persecution and discrimination attitude and or homophobic harassment against sexual orientation or gender identity on any state or non-state levels violate human rights, as explained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.



Encouragement of civil society, especially protection and support offered to human right protectors is one of the central themes of the German and European human rights policy. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany stands against all forms of discrimination against sexual orientation and consistently fights against the discrimination of lesbian, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals and intersexual. Therefore, within the framework of bilateral cooperation of the German Foreign Ministry, as for this case, the programs aimed at improving the rights of LGBT people are also supported.<sup>1</sup>

This message of the Embassy and the parallel intolerance and responses that spread hate were widely spread in the online environment of RA/ new posts appearing in social networking from websites, then again go to the site especially with acute implications of intolerance and subtopics/.

Because during the study period political and civic processes were more active, so this fact, that is financial support, was also considered with a political context, some politicians saw it.

**Aram Sargsyan. «GERMAN AMBASSADOR'S SUPPORT TO GAY" "IS AN ATTACK ON THE ARMENIAN FAMILY".**



"This shameful decision is unacceptable for Aram Sargsyan, the President of Democratic Party of Armenia and Arman Boshyan the Head of All-Armenian Parent Committee" NGO.<sup>2</sup>

"Why the German Embassy doesn't support the traditional families?" asks rhetoric question Aram Sargsyan. »We hardly liberated and cleaned Komaygi Park from sexual minorities. In the end, none interferes with these minorities to do their job, but they always want more, "said the party leader.

According to the head of the Democratic Party, German Ambassador's decision "is a large-scale attack on the family, traditions and values. Aram Sargsyan calls for the German Ambassador to give that 30,000 euro grant to the sexual minorities in Germany, to their gays."

In addition to the Ambassador's decision the speaker is concerned also for two Juvenal justice and anti-discrimination bills that soon will be submitted to the parliament. "This is a clear plan. They want to depopulate Armenia," the politician believes.

The other speaker –the founding member of the Pan parental Committee Arman Boshyan said that the German Embassy in Armenia has the right to conduct similar activities in Armenia and provide

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eriwan.diplo.de/Vertretung/eriwan/hy/03-Politik/Menschenrechtspolitik/2015-6-9-new-generation-vertrag.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.iravunk.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27732:-l-r-r&catid=123:top](http://www.iravunk.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27732:-l-r-r&catid=123:top)



money for the homosexuals. «In Armenia it is not only permitted, but there is no law to prohibit the Embassy to provide homosexuals with money, even more, Azerbaijan or Turkey can do the same thing. In other words, there is no law that controls foreign funds that are actually opposed to our national security. "

According to Boshyan, if Armenia passes a law that will control over foreign funds, the government will have problems with the West, and Armenia will no longer be financially supported. "

We should note that the title of this material prompts about the material being intolerant, and in the article in which the journalist qualifies the financial assistance as a "disgraceful decision", which prompts about the intolerance of media and journalists. However, taking into account the rapid manifestations of hatred and intolerance of www.iravunk.com website, not only against the LGBT community but also to the various vulnerable groups and persons involved in the protection of their interests, it must be stated that this is a "discreet" manifestation for this site.

During the social protest «Electric Yerevan" initiative associated with the increase in energy prices, a chain of discussions related to the LGBT community broke in the social networks. From here the records appeared on websites-with new content, and then went back to social networks.



One example:

A Facebook user Arman Gabrielyan responding to one of the representatives of show business, who was rapidly removed from the Internet, in order to avoid the noise, had written.

"There were several LGBTs among the young people who won in Baghramyan Street and all of us / even the Republicans / are proud of them because they are also the pride of this society."

It's interesting, that civic active people, including journalists, representatives from media field, in their personal pages speak against homophobia, raise LGBT community problems more often than media does which is considered as an important component of the civil society.

Parallel to civil and political processes there appeared records against homophobia.

It is interesting that this year, along with civil rebellions the records against homophobia have become bolder and are circulated on websites and social networks more frequently.

A Facebook user Arsen Ohanian, when writing against homophobia in the social network, calls for anyone to raise their own awareness before writing anything against LGBT people.

"There was a time I was homophobic, I would say: "They have to be burned, choked, killed; this doesn't fit to Armenian..." and so on. Yeah, yeah, I happened to be an axe once. Then I liked a girl and I started writing her. So we contacted for some time. She was a good person and very pretty. Then I found out that she was a lesbian. She presented her girlfriend. They were a very nice couple, complementary to each other. Little by little, I realized that a person's sexual orientation is not a human attribute; I mean that is not a criterion for good or bad person. After we made friends, and now we are good friends. Then I got acquainted with their surroundings, their gay friends. I met many people with whom I associated; I think some of them are close to me. Intrigued, I began to get more information about that phenomenon via the Internet connection and gay friends. I found out a lot for me. For example, this phenomenon has been in nature and will be that it always existed among people and will happen REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY, that we, Armenians, also had it. I read somewhere that Tigran the Great was a bisexual (I don't know if this is true) that people are born or become gays (if I'm wrong, correct me), that it is not a human choice, that they are neither increasing nor decreasing, their number is always the same with a small fluctuations. What I mean is: a. before expressing an opinion about something, before hating them, before calling to burn / strangle or eviction, study the phenomenon, be informed, because not being aware of these incidents and hating them is nonsense. PS: All those who say "And what if my child becomes like them?" If you have a bit of information about the phenomenon, you will not say anything like that. P.S. Recently I discovered that my friend of 7 years is gay, but it does not change our relationship.

These types of records typically do not remain without any respond.

Another user, disgracing a person expressing himself against Homophobia, makes some comments that are worth attention because they speak about the encouragement of terrible events that are rooted in the society.

... You become gays because of the wrong upbringing of your parents...

... Each parent will commit suicide if they know that their child is gay, you can do to each other whatever you want, but do not preach that...



Then he describes that his 14-year-old son watched the video "where the gay boy started crying and told how they beat him and his partner" and said that their relatives should be ashamed of them ...

And he writes proudly: "Yes, my son is a future man. He should beat and bring to conscious the gays...."

... "Gays have no place in Armenia"...

The author of these lines does not know what homosexuality is, and there is a complete lack of desire to obtain knowledge on the subject. The record against Homophobia is perceived as propaganda for homosexuality. With these few lines we present, how the Armenian mother and father inspire intolerance, hatred and violence in their children.

The "Gays have no place in Armenia" expression very clearly represents the opinion of the majority of Armenian public, intolerance which gives birth the hatred, discrimination, violence, which takes our society away from the vision of being democratic.

"Constitutional Mess"

After "Electric Yerevan" initiative, a new political process began to be actively discussed—the constitutional reform, which during the study period, kept the topic on the LGBT community on the top priority themes for the public, unfortunately also in terms of manifestations of hatred.

Once, some cases were registered when people received the hatred of the homophobias and LGBT community. Generally, affiliation of politicians, party leaders and officials or their connection with the LGBT community became especially vulnerable for them in 2015, along with discussions on constitutional reform.

Because of the large community intolerance this subject is applied by different people and forces as a "black PR" tool.

In fact, the problems are not covered or presented. Often they raise a fuss through the media and social networks; they simply make noise around any person or political decision.

And often just for mixing playing cards they raised a similar online noise, sowing intolerance and violating a number of human rights, maiming human destinies.

Some argued that the new draft constitution will play an important role for the LGBT community. Various debates and contradictory opinions on fixing the gay marriage in the main law were published.



**The Venice Commission is against the constitutional ban on same-sex marriages**

<http://www.1in.am/1686315.html>

The Venice Commission is not satisfied with this formulation. According to the document prepared by the Commission, although the Venice Commission acknowledges the importance of Armenian Apostolic Church in the development of culture and in the protection of national identity, it has a reservation regarding to the "unique mission" formulation, which can lead to incorrect interpretations. It is necessary to note that the articles 16 and 17 of the draft Constitution are not different from the formulations of the current Constitution, and "exclusive mission" formulation is also available in the current Constitution. It does not hinder the freedom of churches and other religious communities, and in spite of that, the Venice Commission insists that the wording should be removed from the draft.

The Venice Commission wants the Draft Constitution not to restrict the possibility of legalization of same-sex marriages. The document represented by the Committee runs that the 34th and 15th articles of the draft Constitution should not be interpreted as legal obstacles for the recognition of same-sex marriages. The Article 15 of the Constitution is entitled "The Protection of the Family," and it runs that the family is the natural and fundamental cell of society, the bases of the preservation and breeding of the population. It is under special state protection and patronage. This means that the state recognizes a family as a unity, which can ensure the reproduction of the population. In case of homosexual marriages the reproduction is simply impossible and therefore it cannot be called a family. The Article 34, titled «Freedom of Marriage," runs that the man and the woman that reached the age of marriage have the right to marry and found a family with the expression of their free will. This is also constitutional ban to legitimize the same-sex marriages, and the Commission does not accept these formulations.



**"If same-sex marriage is legalized and gay marriages are performed, then the gays will eat us." Gurgen Yeghiazaryan.** <sup>3</sup>



Besides the reproduction of the government the Constitutional Amendments contain greater evils. The former security service officer Gurgen Yeghiazaryan expressed this kind of opinion at the press conference today.

Turning to the main law on gender equality he noted that Europe is trying to bring toxic assets. "If same-sex marriage is legalized and gay marriages are performed, then the gays will eat us." - said Gurgen Yeghiazaryan. Another speaker, the Republican Lernik Aleksyan disagreed with Gurgen Yeghiazaryan. The ARP MP again stressed that the issue on reproduction of power will not be resolved through constitutional amendments.

"As to homosexual marriage, I would say that such a clause will not be included in the Constitution." said Lernik Alexanyan.



**Hovhannes Galajayn's Facebook entry:**

... The rotter flag decorated with "No," is put as a back picture...

Many people mention in the social networks insist that gays are for the new draft constitution, because they will be able to marry, many homosexuals claim that as citizens of RA they are against the new Constitution, because they do not agree with some of the provisions.

In fact, this issue, as mentioned above, has often been speculated by this or that political and non-political forces.

This topic was addressed by the LGBTnews.am electronic news website, explaining in details the reasons of "a new wave of homophobia" and the role of the media. The article is presented below in fragments.

<sup>3</sup> <http://news-book.am/?p=66048/mi+qani+angam+kardacel+em+sahmanadrutyam+nor+tarberaky+bayc+chem+haskacel+tevov+e+pahtpanutyam+naxary+gurgem+exiazaryan&l=am>



### **What is the reason for the emergence of a new wave of homophobia?**

It's already a few days that a new wave of homophobia started in the Facebook social network. Users of the Web debate on attitudes toward LGBT people and their rights. As before, this time the records are not free from hate speech, insults and mutual accusations.

About a week ago, as we have already stated, that the Venice Commission affiliated to Council of Europe issued a preliminary assessment of the constitutional amendments in Armenia.

In the published document along with various provisions of the draft observations, the committee referred to Point 34 of the document, "Freedom Marriage" according to which "the man and the woman that reached the age of marriage have the right to marry and found a family with the expression of their free will." It referred also to Point 15.

In its assessment the Venice Commission noted that the article should not be interpreted as a «ban for the legal recognition of same-sex unions."

As justification for this position, the Venice Commission referred to the ECHR court case.

We have already written about the dangers of formulations of the 34th and 15th paragraphs of Draft Constitutional amendments.

This assessment of the Venice Commission caused both arguments and interpretations.

### **What was the media role?**

In the Armenian press 1in.am site was the first one to refer to the assessment of the Venice Commission with a press release on August 3, with the following material "Venice Commission opposes a constitutional ban on same-sex marriages."

The material, however, is not only about the assessment of the Venice Commission on same-sex unions. It represents the essence of the document published by the Commission. It also outlines the Commission's assessment on religious organizations. The last 4 paragraphs of the material are general judgments on estimates made by the Venice Commission and on constitutional reforms initiated by the authorities of Armenia, and there is only one paragraph on the observation of the Commission in reference to same-sex unions, which states that "the formulations are not acceptable for the Venice Commission," but, unfortunately, the Commission did not have enough courage, to announce openly saying that the existing formulations are not acceptable. The Commission merely noted that the wording should not be considered as an obstacle for the legal recognition of same-sex unions. Thus the presented material is distorted and the part on same-sex unions is separated as a title although the majority of material content has a different emphasis. It is noteworthy that "same-sex union" has been introduced with the formulation of a "gay marriage", including the title, but firstly, "union" and "marriage" is different legal formats, and "gay" has long been viewed as incorrect term.

The "People" newspaper website also covered the topic.

By distorting the assessment of the Commission the website writes that "The Venice Commission doesn't accept these formulations and the Commission wants to add counter formulation in the draft thus to fix homosexual marriages in the constitution" but, as mentioned above, the Venice Commission has only mentioned that the formulations of the draft for amendments should not be considered as an obstacle for the legal recognition of same-sex unions.

Then the unknown author of the material writes. "However, it should be noted that it is an alien phenomenon for the Armenians. It is true that some European countries have adopted same-sex marriages, but that does not mean that it can also be accepted in Armenia. There are a number of questions, ranging from the type of the Armenian, the Armenian mentality, lifestyle and so on."

The continuation of the material on the theme is Armen Hovhannisyan's /the member of "Hayazn" party/ comment in the website, in which he criticized the Venice Commission. The article does not represent any opposite point of view. There are no certain materials with contrary opinions represented on the site either.

The very next day, "Aravot" website refers to the topic with two materials.

In the first article the website published Komitas priest's comment, which is completely within the frames of "no female beast is related with female or male to male, even plus does not join plus, nor minus joins minus" style.

In the second story, perhaps in contrast to the first opinion the website has published the comment of Artur Sakunts, the human rights defender. Sakunts notes that he agrees with the remarks of the Venice Commission.

Mostly these two publications caused a homophobic wave among the Facebook social network users of propagation. Not only LGBT people, but also a human rights defender Arthur Sakunts became targets.

But these two publications were not enough for "Aravot. Yesterday the website published the comment of Gurgen Yeghiazaryan, the former deputy of chief of National Security Service. The article begins with distorting the remarks of the Venice Commission. "Referring to the draft Constitution the Venice Commission has proposed to amend Articles 34 and 15, without limiting the gay marriages. The first sentence of the material runs: "According to the Commission, the Articles 34 and 15 of the draft Constitution, could be perceived as a legal ban for the recognition of same-sex marriages", while the Venice Commission, as already mentioned above for several times, has not proposed to do amendments in the provisions, but said that they should not be interpreted as a ban for the legal recognition of same-sex unions, and not that they will be perceived as such. In this case are we dealing with a journalist's ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation, and one can only guess? Note that we meet "homosexual", "homosexuality", "homosexual" incorrect statements for several times in

the article both in Yeghiazaryan's speech quotes and the journalist's text segments. It should be noted that Yeghiazaryan's interpretation has completely homophobic nature.

Yesterday a number of websites (news.am, aseko.am, armtimes.com etc.) published the joint statement of Evangelical church leaders. The latter inform the professional Commission for constitutional amendments "not to indulge to the opinion of international structures" and call to find more "decisive" wording «as a result of which marriage will be solely interpreted as a union between a man and a woman."

Why are these sites, and especially "Aravot" with a unique consistency, as seen from the above mentioned perspective, referred to Venice Commission document, violating the elementary rules of journalism and displaying either incompetence or distortion tendency, a subject to the assumption?

At the moment, we have not met any other publications in the press referring to the subject.

All publications mentioned in the article have been discussed on social networks, quickly passing from ideological clashes to personal insults. This transition is almost a standard, which is another indicative of the intolerance.

During the study time period 60-70% of the published materials contain negative attitude, hate speech expression and violation of human rights against the representatives of LGBT community, and the individuals who display acts of tolerance and organizations protecting their interests.



Հովհաննես Գալաջյան  
Ներառական կրթությունը  
ինքնին հանցագործ  
համակարգ է, քանզի ստիպում է  
մեծամասնությանը հարմարվել  
պորբլեմ ունեցողներին: Եթե  
դառնաներին բերեն  
սովորական դասարան, ապա  
ստիպված ամբողջ դասարանին  
պիտի տան դառնաներին  
համապատասխանող ուսուցում  
ու վարի տան ընդհանուրի  
կրթական մակարդակը:  
Ներառական կրթությունը ես  
չեմ կարող դիտարկել այլ կերպ,  
քան աշակերտների  
համատարած դեբիլիզացիայի  
ծրագիր:

2 minutes ago · Like · Reply

As in previous years, this year also the distribution and authoring of such articles, the first place among the media takes the [www.iravunk.com](http://www.iravunk.com).

If in the past year in this media sector the hate mostly fell on religious minorities and LGBT people, then this year, the editor John Galajyan in his Facebook page had insulted another vulnerable group-person with disabilities, considering inclusive education as a criminal system.

If the last year a court case was brought against the newspaper by a number of citizens and the representatives of organizations protecting the interests of LGBT people, then this year the organizations defending the rights of people with disabilities also joined this army.

But this type of violations of human rights-the published materials based on the opinions; do not disturb the Editor to get an award from the President for carrying out his professional mission in the best way.

Of course these facts have been discussed in the Internet, but not during the study period.

Perhaps as a result of the promotion for this conduct, too often, as in previous years, there is an intolerant attitude toward LGBT people. Personal insults are brought to the representatives of organizations dealing with human rights and protection of LGBT people.



### Examples

**Konstantin Ter-Nakalyan**  
55 mins · Yerevan · Edited

հետաքրքիր և, եւ փինք արմենիայի ու նոր սերունդի պոպսիկները ոնց կրացատորեն, թե ինչու Ավստրալիայում եւ առկույթյամբ մասսայական արտագաղթի չի սկսել ու ինչու Ավստրալիան հետամնաց երկիր չի, չէ՞ որ պոպսիկների համաշխարհային լիգան այսպիսի ապստան լադոսց չէր ստացել:

այսրի Ավստրալիան, կարգին բասիքով պետություն ու հասարակություն ունեն:

Верховный суд Австралии аннулировал все однополые браки в стране  
«р»Высокий суд Австралии принял решение об аннулировании однополых браков, а закон о легализации однополых браков признан противоречащим...  
RUSSIAN.RT.COM

Facebook user Konstantin Ter-Nakalyane, who is an employee of blogmews.am, so he is a media representative, sharing an old material on the Australian Court annulling homosexual marriages in his Facebook page, insults "PINK Armenia" and "New Generation" NGO representatives, by calling them "pupsiks", implies that intolerance towards homosexuality doesn't promote emigration, nor prevents the development of the state.

### I DON'T CONSIDER THE RIGHTS OF LGBT PEOPLE HUMAN RIGHTS. RUZANNA MURADYAN-ARP

LGBTnews continues the series of interviews with MPs, and this time we tried to clarify the



opinion of the National Assembly Republican Party MP, the member of Human Rights and Public Affairs Standing Committee Ruzanna Muradyan's opinion on the LGBT people and their rights:

-Mrs. Muradian, how do you assess the state of LGBT rights in Armenia.

- I do not want to observe it as human rights.

- If non-human, then the right of what kind of creatures do you want to observe?

-I would like to say that we cannot go against something created by the nature and God.

- Then why are you inclined against LGBT people? Aren't they created by the nature or as you said by God?

-I'm talking about relationships, about the continuity of nature. I have my clear understanding that everything should be within the frames of natural law. No, I know, I have nothing against anyone, everyone is free to choose his preferences, but I do not support this principle.

-Does this mean that you consider homosexuality a hobby?

-I do not know, I do not consider it a hobby, I do not even know what grade to give to it.

- As an MP, don't you feel obliged to protect the rights of LGBT people as citizens of Armenia?

- It is a little inappropriate for our nation. But if we don't accept LGBT people it does not mean that we don't protect their rights at all.

-How do you protect their rights? What have you done since being elected as an MP to protect the rights of LGBT persons?

- These citizens are involved in various fields, and their rights are protected. What kind of topic have you chosen? How could you? Let's not propagandize for it. When we talk about all this, it is already propaganda.

- Do you think talking about the citizens' problems a propaganda?

-I said what I think and I had finished. I have no other opinion. That's it. That's all.

About 20-25% of published materials during the study period contain relatively neutral information. They were mainly the materials translated from foreign media; mainly from the Russian media.





## Colombia same-sex couples will be able to adopt children.<sup>4</sup>

Colombia's Constitutional Court has removed the restriction on same-sex adoption.

Before this law same-sex adoption was allowed in cases where one member of the couple is the biological parent.

The court decision was that the restriction

limited the right of children to have a family.:

This type of material often contain general information relating to any issue or decision of the LGBT community, but do not raise problems, usually do not have specific actors, and have little contribution in raising the awareness on the LGBT community and their problems. All these materials that seem so neutral at first sight, as do not contain any call for hatred, and journalists' opinions etc., are often chosen with subtexts on important phenomena for the community. In this particular example, it is the family and the child. With the help of this subtext they show that "this is the formula of the family imported from abroad" and it is very different from the family which is the union of an Armenian woman and a man. In this case, this material comes to show the examples of manifestations of intolerance mentioned in the first section. The only thing is that it is done via subtext without manifestation of any appeals and hatred.

### **The share of hate speech against the LGBT community with ratio and examples in the online domain.**

**10-15% of published materials and the materials that appeared in the online environment during the study period are the publications about the LGBT community problems with real actors and real facts.**

10% of these messages are disseminated by non-governmental organizations, which, unfortunately, often after generating negative feedback in the social networks and by some media give birth to new materials disseminating intolerance, hatred and discrimination.

In the study period Arman Gharibyan's /a journalist/ materials have been distinguished for presenting the community intolerance, raising LGBT problems with professional activity and we will present one of his publications as a material presenting a problem, a real actor and facts.

<sup>4</sup> <http://araratnews.am/kolumbiayum-nuynaserakannereh-kkaroghanan-erexa-ordegrel>

From Medialab.am this story appeared in the blogmews.am, as well as in other sections of the websites having other blogs and then in the social networks.

**Sexual exploitation and "dirty work". The homosexual prisoners live in the "hell".**

"In the yard of the "Zone", there is a toilet for 12 people. They had sex there every day. The homosexuals were forced into the toilet and...." 31-year-old Gor was released from jail last year and the memories are still fresh.



Gor (not his real name) is gay. In prison, everyone knew about the young man's sexual orientation.

"People think if you're gay, then you should have sex with any guy, but I've been connected with one guy and our relationship lasted for 9 months. I haven't had sex with someone else, though they forced me many times..." says Gor.

The boy grew up in an orphanage in Yerevan. Later he was adopted by a family living in Shirak region. As a grown up, Gor leaved for Turkey, where he worked as a waiter.

In 2007 after returning to Armenia, he was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment on charges of murder and steal. Gor said he was not a criminal, he was "being set up" because they were aware of his sexual orientation.

"I couldn't arrange my life ... I do not know who my real parents are. This is the way my personal life was arranged. I was in prison for 7 years meaninglessly. Sometimes, when I remember I want to commit suicide," says Gor.

During those 7 years, the young man managed to be in several prisons - Artik, Kosh and Nubarashen. Gor said that in prisons all homosexuals are treated almost the same way. If you are gay, you should be ready for the worst treatment and humiliation.

"They wanted to make me clean the toilets, but I had not cleaned them. They beat me for this. Then I called the Ombudsman's office. They came to me, after that, noone beat me," says Gor.

In prisons the prisoners stay in individual cells, for their own safety, though they don't guarantee them from sexual violence and exploitation.

"The good guys at Zone" pay the prison employee 1000-2000 drams for him to take a gay to their cell. If the gay does not want then they take him by force. They use the guy the way they want and

then the same employee takes him to his cell. The prison employees give the permission to the prisoners. They say to prisoners that they can do whatever they want," tells Gor.

His words were supported by Sergey Gabrielian, the President of "New Generation" non-governmental organization and Arman Sahakyan, the Coordinator of the Department promoting diversity for NGOs. Since 2013 they have been members of the Public Monitoring Group at penitentiary institutions and bodies of Ministry of Justice of RA.

"Just being gay is enough for the prisoners to curse the gays, their parents and still remain unpunished", says Sergey Gabrielyan to "Medialab."

Sergey Gabrielyan noted that homosexuals are forced to deal with the most dishonorable work in the prison - cleaning toilets. Moreover, the homosexuals are not only forced to clean the toilet in their cell, but also the toilets of other cells.

"Same-sex people have no right to use the common cafeteria; their dishes are separated from others' with special signs. There is a penitentiary office where the opposite thing occurred; as the gay person already had access to the cafeteria, the others did not go there to eat anymore," said Gabrielyan.

Arman Sahakyan mentioned that the discriminatory attitude towards homosexuals is evident not only from the foul language labels used by the employees at penitentiary institutions (prisons), but also from their living conditions.

"Cells for homosexuals differ from other cells, the property is worn, there is no heating, the linen is dirty," Sahakyan says to "Medialab".

The observers note that the gays at jail mostly are reluctant to speak out about the violence against them but they tell horrible cases that happened with the other homosexual prisoners.

"When we call the homosexual prisoners to complain, thus trying to protect their rights, they say: "I do not want to, I do not need anything. I just want to come out of this hell". They have a calendar and delete the days, impatiently waiting for their day of freedom," says Sergey Gabrielyan.

Former prisoner Gor tells "Medialab" that he also did not want to complain against the violence.

"I was beaten by 4-5 people, because I did not agree to have sex with someone who I did not like. It was clear from my face that I was beaten, but I did not complain, and nor did the employees ever ask me what had happened," he says.

According to, Artur Sakunts, the expert of the observation group and human rights advocate the attitude towards homosexuals in prisons is not different from the general attitude in the society.

According to the World Value Survey Database 2010-2014, the highest level of intolerance in Armenia is towards homosexuals - 92.7%, in the second group are those who have aids-76.9%, in the third group are those who are representatives of other religious organizations -56.6%.

"The same model operates both in the prisons and in our society, simply it is more concentrated and evident in closed institutions," says Sakunts to "Medialab."

The lawyer has been at penitentiary institutions in Norway, Poland, Germany, Estonia, the Netherlands and the United States and hasn't noticed any crime against same-sex people.

"At these institutions the homosexuals have no problems that's why there is no such a problem in their prisons, too," he said.

Arthur Sakunts witnessed discriminatory attitude towards a prisoner at one penitentiary in Armenia.

"The prisoner had swallowed a nail, but they did not want to move him to a prison hospital because the hospital had no separate space to allocate him. Later, they prepared a separate place and moved him. This means that these people are separated from others at medical institutions, too," says Arthur Sakunts.

At the penitentiary institutions the corresponding bodies have no intention of speaking and giving explanation on the attitude toward homosexuals. Since the beginning of June, "Medialab" at least twice has written application to Arthur Osikyan, Major General, and the head of the Ministry of Justice of RA, with the request to allow conducting interviews on the topic with the representative of the social, psychological and legal department.

In response to our request, the Deputy Head Armen Hambarzumyan said:"The social, psychological and legal department of the Ministry of Justice works with overloaded agenda. Headed by the chief of Department the staff of the department is conducting investigations at penitentiary institutions, so this interview is not possible for now."

Marine Gasparyan, the employee of the Department, told us over the phone that the whole department is on a business trip, which will be completed by the end of July. However, in late July "Medialab" requests remained unanswered.

"To what extent the government's attitude has changed against the homosexual persons in Armenia that much the situation of homosexual persons in penitentiary institutions has improved."-says the Chairman of "New Generation" NGO Sergey Gabrielyan. "As long as the ruling party has a negative attitude towards homosexual persons, the situation will not change. There should be a clear instruction that gays have the same rights as everyone else ".

In its last year annual report the Monitoring Group referred to the problem of protection of rights of homosexual persons at prisons. A year later, however, human rights defenders had not observed any reform in this direction.



According to experts soon the annual report with the most comprehensive reference to homosexual prisoners' rights will be published.

Sergey Gabrielyan believes that the situation can be changed with the presence of two conditions simultaneously: inform people, raise their political consciousness and pass a political resolution on homosexual persons' rights. The lawyer said that "Armenia has ratified almost all international documents concerning the rights of homosexuals."

Arthur Sakunts is also sure that the Chiefs of prisons can improve the living conditions of homosexual prisoners and their attitude towards them if they wish to. In his turn, Sakunts notes that the Chiefs of these institutions are appointed by the President of RA.

Human rights' activists point to a change of attitude towards people living with HIV.

"There was a time when people treated people who were living with HIV badly, but the government had shown a clear position and the attitude of the majority of society had changed. This change was also evident with prisoners living with HIV. A similar change could also be for homosexual people, if the government demonstrated proper position," says Sergey Gabrielyan.

Gor, who has returned to civilian life for about 10 months, has a job and is not hiding his sexual orientation at the workplace. "I told them that I am a homosexual. If you want you can accept me, if you do not want, then it's your problem."

Gore says that in contrast to the years spent in prison, nobody is trying to force him to have sex with them.

"People may not accept me, but no one will come and rape me in the daytime," he says. "Sometimes I do not believe that I have come out of that hell."

**Arman Gharibyan**

**PHOTO: Gor**

**<http://medialab.am/news/id/6632>**

We placed the whole material to clearly show that in order to present comprehensive facts the journalist had tried to establish contact with the relevant government agencies. The journalist had presented the viewpoints of the representatives of several legal governmental organizations. The journalist hadn't focused only on the fate of his hero but presented a series of problems of LGBT community including the attitude of government agencies and the public toward homosexuals.

In the title, photos and in the material demonstration of discrimination and hatred is missing. There are no contexts and hints of discrimination, appeals, and the rules of ethics are protected and finally we presented the destiny of citizens of RA and the human destiny in general.







## Case Events

### LGBT flag was burned in front of the EU embassy in Yerevan<sup>5</sup>

Today, on November 6 "For the Law" social and political organization burned the LGBT flag in front of the building of EU Delegation, thus urging European Union and the international organizations in Armenia to stop preaching homosexuality.

Tsovinar Kostanyan, a member of "For the Law" social and political organization noted that protecting the rights of different types of "suspicious minorities" and considering

them equal with national values means to undermine the foundations of the state, informed news.am.

"We, being Armenians, the representatives of a nation, which was the first to adopt Christianity as a state religion, deem it necessary, that we should protect the fundamental values of Christianity. We do not want to violate anyone's rights, but also will not allow anyone to violate our rights," said Tsovinar Kostanyan.

After burning the LGBT flag in front of EU building, the representatives of EU office approached the activists. They were extremely surprised at what was happening in front of their office. "For the law," organization handed them the demand urging them to refrain from propagandizing homosexuality.

#### **Arman Sahakyan, Facebook entries:**

"Burning of the flag which is the symbol of a group of people that are full members of the society is a serious and dangerous challenge to the Constitution, realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms that are fixed in the laws and international documents. This creates serious doubts about the principles of democracy."

www.asparez.am has presented to the public attention an interview on this phenomenon with **Sergey Gabrielyan**, the human rights defender and president of "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO.<sup>6</sup>

**"There are forces in Armenia that contribute to the dissemination of discrimination, especially among youth and adolescents."**

On November 6th there was a demonstration, in front of the building of European Union in support of the rights of majority. On this occasion we talked to Sergey Gabrielyan, the President and lawyer of "New Generation" NGO.

**-How do you comment on the demonstration that took place outside the European Union building for the rights of the majority?**

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.verelq.am/hy/node/4451>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.asparez.am/news-hy/sergey\\_gabrielyan-hy-2/](http://www.asparez.am/news-hy/sergey_gabrielyan-hy-2/)

-First of all, I would like to say that the rally was against the US ambassador's statement. It was very interesting that the demonstration was taking place in front of the EU building. The situation was unclear. It was not clear what the connection was between the European Union and the US embassy's statement. Secondly, what a majority or a minority means, who has decided the dimensions of majority or minority, where these standards are fixed. Do we have majority or minority concepts in the constitution? The demonstration has been directed against LGBT people, and according to demonstrators, they are a majority and the LGBT people are minority. But where are these standards written? Who is a majority? Who is a minority? Definitely it was a demonstration that showed that there were movements in Armenia, there were forces that contribute to the dissemination of discrimination, especially among adolescents and young people, strengthen people's hatred and the struggle filled with hate. I do not even understand what they are fighting against, who those fighters are. I looked at a few photos there. There were also young people and adolescents there. And I think if their participation in that demonstration was permitted, whether it was legitimate or not, and, in general, whether the relevant authorities of the municipality were informed about this action and if it was legal. According to a number of certified documents, RA is liable for fighting against the issues causing racial hatred and discrimination. Organization of such an action is against the human and legal provisions. There has been no time ever, when both religious and ethnic minorities, or the LGBT community organized campaigns for the protection of their rights in this way, I mean that they have never burned a flag for the protection of their rights or they have never burned the pictures of any Minister for the protection of their rights, even though we know very well that the hatred towards these people is huge, but these people have never made any attempts with such hatred. However, we saw the contrary picture that happened in front of the EU Delegation building.

**-You mentioned about the US ambassador's statement. Could you tell the details what was it about?**

- "Public Information and Need of Knowledge" NGO recently organized a LGBT forum, which was attended by LGBT persons and human rights activists. According to my information, they presented problems and the steps to solve those problems. They discussed the Topic-"What can be done for the human rights not to be violated and for them to be top priority in RA? Later, the citizens filled with hatred against this information disseminated discrediting and terrorism calls in the social networks. The US acting ambassador immediately issued a statement urging these people to avoid those calls and to try to make sure that no such things happen in RA. And we saw what happened to the call directed to the democracy, protection of human rights, and protection of equal rights. There was a demonstration with hatred, discrimination and intolerance against the application of equal rights for LGBT people.

**-Are such protests, marches new?**

-Such demonstrations happened in Armenia a few years ago, when they attacked the young people who organized the demonstration for diversity. We can remember the explosion of DIY club, which remained unrevealed. There was an online attack on "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO. They broke the windscreen of our colleague's car after which we immediately tried to settle the security issues of the whole office. There have been not only demonstrations but also propaganda via social networks and media against NGOs and individuals dealing with such issues. We are well aware of this kind of calls in all publications by "Iravunk" newspaper. The MP Hayk Babukhanyan urged the relevant authorities to deal with the "New Generation" NGO issues. In other words, I can say that this is not new for Armenia. And these unsolved crimes and impunity lead to the demonstration that we witnessed that day. Burning of the flag which is the symbol of a group of people that are full members of the society is a serious and dangerous challenge to the Constitution, realization of human



rights and fundamental freedoms that are fixed in the laws and international documents. This creates serious doubts about the principles of democracy.

**After burning the flag the second and the culmination part of precedential events was provided by the message and the video with a series of violations of human rights-starting from the immunity of personal life, ending with a demonstration of intolerance and hatred. This revealed that one of the politicians who burned the LGBT flag belonged to the LGBT community.**

17.11.2015

**ROBERT AHARONIAN WHO  
BURNED THE LGBT FLAG IS A  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
LGBT COMMUNITY.  
MESSAGE (VIDEO)<sup>7</sup>**



"Let's reveal homophobic gays"

initiative sent a press release to the official e-mail of LGBTnews.am that Robert Aharonian who is the leader of «Socialist Movement of Armenia» is a representative of the LGBT community. A video is attached to the message.

Robert Aharonian, who is the leader of "Socialist Movement of Armenia" is combating actively against the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community and those who protect their rights, in fact is a representative of the LGBT community. The attached video shows how he gets acquainted with men in the gay dating site for sex purposes.

R. Aharonian often appears in different medias, with regard to the topics that have public interest. Although 1.5 months ago photos were published on Facebook about his orientation, he continued his homophobic statements and activities. On November 6, with a group of young men he organized a demonstration in front of EU office against LGBT people, burning the rainbow flag which was their symbol. Given the fact that Robert Aharonian is a public figure and disseminates statements and activities against a particular social group and spreads hatred and is a member of this group, we publish this video, taking into account the public importance of this issue.

There are also some doubts that Aharonian and his teammates, getting acquainted with young boys through the Internet, under threat of revealing their orientation they force the young guys to join them in their initiatives and events."-the statement runs.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.lgbtnews.am/%D5%AC%D5%A3%D5%A2%D5%BF-%D5%A4%D6%80%D5%B8%D5%B7%D5%B6-%D5%A1%D5%B5%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%AE-%D5%BC%D5%B8%D5%A2%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%BF-%D5%A1%D5%B0%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B8%D5%B6%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A8-%D5%AC%D5%A3/>

Let us remind the reader that outing is a means of struggle for the protection of the rights of LGBT persons from publicizing others' sexual orientation or gender identity without their knowledge in different countries and different periods, which is directed to reveal especially the mismatch of the actions and opinions of public officials expressed on LGBT rights.

Below is the video and the editor does not recommend that persons under the age of 18 to watch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkYXAYD5zxQ>

On Facebook there was no lack of records on this subject.

Արտնի Օհանյան

2 hrs · Erevan · Edited ·

I told you that there are gays among the homophobias and you did not believe. Especially those angry, enraged homophobias who also hate women are definitely hidden gays. But now I'm not going to mock at Robert Aharonyan- who is a famous homophobias and a fascist and we found out that he is gay and hates women. No brother, I pity him. He is a victim of our reality. I will tell you why. Our people have accepted that LGBT is a perversion and deformity, non-natural. It is accepted opinion to hate them /burn, kill, call for expulsion. As a result, many LGBT representatives are trying to rein in their sexual orientation, are trying to pretend heterosexual. They begin to fight against their physiology, resulting in the accumulation of anger because they cannot do anything against their physiology. The more they fight against themselves, the more furious they become because the physiology has its rules and the public opinion and education have their rules. Now, if this man settled everything and accepted himself the way he was he wouldn't have struggled against himself, he wouldn't become a fascist and would not fall into this scandal. Oh, and I would like to say that not all fascists, intolerants are hidden in LGBT community. There are also just axes, who became fascists because of the public opinion and ignorance.

**The adequate response from human rights organizations was not late either.**



18.11.2015 | PINK ARMENIA APPEALS TO REFRAIN FROM ATTACKS AGAINST ROBERT AHARONYAN <sup>8</sup>

Pink Armenia has issued a statement concerning the press release on Robert Aharonian, the leader of "Socialist Movement of Armenia" on the results of the press publications on the eve.

"Taking into account the interest of media and public for the video which was disseminated with the participation of Robert Aharonian, the leader

of "Socialist Movement in Armenia" organization" the "Public Information and Need for Knowledge" NGO (PINK Armenia), as an organization protecting the rights of LGBT community, reports that it has

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lgbtnews.am/%D6%83%D5%AB%D5%B6%D6%84-%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B4%D5%A5%D5%B6%D5%AB%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%AF%D5%B8%D5%B9-%D5%A7-%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B4-%D5%A6%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AE-%D5%B4%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AC-%D5%BC%D5%B8%D5%A2/>

nothing in common with the disseminated video and "Let's reveal the homophobic gays" initiative which revealed the video.

However, PINK Armenia urges everyone to refrain from attacks and condemnations against Robert Aharonian accepting his sexual orientation or sexual behavior.



PINK Armenia encourages both the LGBT community and people outside the community to approach the incident with understanding. Many people are known in the world who has suffered from domestic homophobia, i.e. not accepting their homosexual orientation. They directed the self-hate against other representatives of the LGBT community (for more details see the article).

This is not the fault of the people for being gay, they are fighting against the LGBT community. The reason is the rooted negative attitudes in society against LGBT people which results organization of homophobic campaigns by the gays in order to save them.

Recognizing the current level of vulnerability of Robert Aharonian and his problematic situation, PINK Armenia expresses its support to him and is ready to provide psycho-social support, -the statement runs.

PINK Armenia calls for refraining from attacks against Robert Aharonian.



**HCA VANADZOR OFFICE HAS DISSEMINATED A STATEMENT ON ROBERT AHARONYAN'S OPERATIONS<sup>9</sup>**

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office issued a statement on the actions of Robert Aharonian, the leader of "Socialist movement" The statement is as follows:

The ongoing discussions and actions that took place after distribution of information regarding Robert Aharonian, the leader of "Socialist Movement in Armenia" prove once again that hatred towards the LGBT community, unfortunately, is perceived as the only acceptable attitude.

So far, the calls for hatred and violence by Robert Aharonian were not receiving proper assessment by law enforcement bodies, though, all the facts and legal grounds were available. And even after the

<sup>9</sup><http://www.lgbtnews.am/%D5%B0%D6%84%D5%A1-%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B1%D5%B8%D6%80%D5%AB-%D5%A3%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%A5%D5%B6%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A8-%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%BF%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9/>



disclosure of his sexual orientation, Mr. Aharonian not only does not regret for his homophobic actions, even more he makes public threats and accusations and even visits those peoples' homes that have spread the famous video material in their own Facebook pages.

We call the police to take immediate measures on Aharonian's public threats and illegal activities which are violence against person's rights to disseminate information. At the same time, we stress that if the police don't provide safety for the persons targeted by Robert Aharonian then we will consider it as a direct support of this violence by the police.

**"This caricature represents the real situation and the format of displaying the rights, liberties abuses, intolerance and hatred of the human being, in this case the representative of LGBT community, in Armenia and online in a best way.**



The study shows that cases of human rights violations and manifestations of hate in the online environment are applied not only against the LGBT community, but also against the human rights activists dealing with their problems. They are often labeled as "traitors, enemies of the nation and the state." below, is the article of Medialab.am about it:

**"Enemies of the state and the nation." What are the human rights defenders forced to pass through in Armenia**

Last year when "Iravunk" newspaper published the controversial «black list» of the enemies of the nation and state, the rights' activist Arman Sahakyan, who was on the list, found the windows of his car broken.

Hovhannes Galajyan, the Editor of «Iravunk» newspaper, announced not to greet, not to help 60 people on the list (journalists, artists, activists, lawyers) or give them jobs. They should be fired from the state service. People should show zero tolerance towards them, because they are "enemies of the state and nation and are zombies."



The representative of "New Generation" NGO tells "Medialab", that the threatening of different degrees and types are simple things for people dealing with the protection of vulnerable groups.



The threats against «New Generation" gained new impetus recently when the German Embassy announced that it is granting 30 million Euros for the creation of a shelter for at least 15 homeless gay people, for their free legal consultation.

"Burn, ruin, break kill, hang; one day you will have a thirty thousand worth car accident," the young activist lists the latest threatening.

When I asked Arthur Sakunts to tell about the threatening he sighed, and then joked: "Which one should I tell?" The head of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office, however, distinguishes the attack which took place during the canceled Azerbaijani film festival in April 2012. A group of people attacked the office of the organization with stones, eggs because the organization had provided space for films.:

"The worst part was when local bodies together with the vigilant supervision of law enforcement agencies conducted the attack. The international human rights organizations expressed their opinion and termed it as an attack on the human rights protection organization and demanded the authorities to ensure freedom of expression," says Sakunts.

In their core dispute the critics of human rights' activists and various non-governmental organizations focused on dissemination of «western spoiled, fake, corrupt values" in Armenia. They called human rights' defenders /dealing with women's issues/ as family demolition workers when they speak out about domestic violence and protect victims of violence.

"They forget that, the family has already been destroyed from the inside, if there is violence," says the head of "Women's Resource Center" Lara Aharonian.

Arman Sahakyan says:"Each activity of the human rights defender is still not safe. If this activity comes out within the frames of norms and traditional understanding, then you break the stereotype; for certain people, for the nationalist parties you become an enemy, someone executing orders, a person sent from abroad."

Sahakyan, by the way, is one of the three plaintiffs that two months ago won the case on the controversial "black list" against "Iravunk" newspaper which belongs to Hayk Babukhanyan, the MP of the Republican Party in the first instance. According to the decision of the court «Iravunk» will have to pay 250 thousand drams to each of the three members of "New Generation" NGO for insulting their honor and dignity. (Earlier to this, because of this list, 16 citizens applied to court, but their request was rejected by both the Court of First Instance and Court of Appeal).

Hovhannes Galajyan, who compiled the list of "The enemies of nation and state", does not agree with the decision. He has applied to the Court of Appeal and argues that the court has made a decision against freedom of speech.

"You are more likely to see the back of your neck than the apology, no matter how the process will be in the next court," says Galajyan.

"New Generation" also appealed to the Court of Appeal, disputing the amount of money and demanding recognition of the fact of discrimination and hate speech incitement.

Human rights activists are concerned over the fact that as Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, hate speech dissemination may be aroused like in Russia, which leads the union. In Russia because of the strained relations with the West, the Western human rights organizations operating locally are often targeted.

"As long as Putin has his own plan to give directions to these attacks and groups, and as long as we live in this regime and system, of course these activities will continue," believes Mamikon Hovsepyan, general manager of "Public Information and Need of Knowledge" NGO (PINK Armenia).

Sakunts expressed his concern about the issue that Russia's attitude towards human rights activists and NGOs also began to prowl the Armenian reality.

Russia has recently adopted a controversial law on NGOs, under which, if an entity distributes materials via media in the Internet without mentioning that the author is an agent of a foreign "non-profit non-governmental organization" then the Ministry of Justice can go to court and fine individuals -100 to 300 thousand rubles (about \$1,700-\$5,200 dollars), while for the juridical persons the amount is 1 million 300 thousand Russian rubles (about \$5,200-\$17,000 dollars).

The appeals for the restrictions on NGO activities have also started in Armenia. Recently, the international humanitarian development NGO stated that it has determined a number of NGOs, which can be used to carry out a Color Revolution in Armenia. A dozens of organizations are included in the list of this NGO including "Eurasia Partnership Foundation", "Open Society - Armenia" Fund, "Helsinki Citizens' Assembly", "The Future is Yours" NGO, "Women's Support Center in Yerevan", "Women Resource Center" and PINK Armenian." Arman Ghukasyan, the head of the organization, even offered to put an end to the uncontrolled growth of non-governmental organizations via state control in order to ensure security and protection of the interests of Armenia."

"It is necessary to direct the activities of NGOs on issues that are important to the public, as well as to develop a system that will not allow external forces to influence on the domestic social and political life through the activities of various NGOs and social movements," Ghukasyan said (<http://sputnik.co.am/armenia/20150718/192198.html>).

"The threats are becoming more substantial," says Sakunts, "The draft law on NGOs' activities had been prepared but it changed. This bill does not contain any threats, but it hasn't been submitted to the government and parliament yet. The Minister of Justice changed and in Armenia as the system is not fully established the behavior of personalities is more predictable than that of the system. In this case, the future of the bill will depend on the political situation, in particular the degree of Russian influence on Armenia's authorities. And I see that the level is increasing, and is covering purely intra-political, intra-situational problems.

Meanwhile, Armenia's top government officials often emphasize the role of civic society in the development and establishment of Armenia. The latest example is perhaps the president's speech directed to the youth protesting against the increase in electricity.

"Yes, the path of democracy, the path for the establishment of civil society is rugged and difficult, but our country has no alternative towards the path leading to democracy. In recent years, we talked about this for many times. All of us should go along this rugged and bending path," said the President.

Sakunts, however, says that when the representatives of civil society become the targets of the attacks and hate speech then the representatives of the government do not criticize them in their public attitudes, moreover, even they keep silence and in some cases sponsor those who spread hate speech.

"I can say that either in silence or in public the government supports the dissemination of hate speech. They are not accountable to democratic rule. Criticisms are perceived as a criticism directed to their personality. They personalize it and in the case of personalization the institutional field, which is the most common to the democratic situation and the state, disappears," the lawyer says.

Naira Gevorgyan, picture-credit, Vahe Harutyunyan

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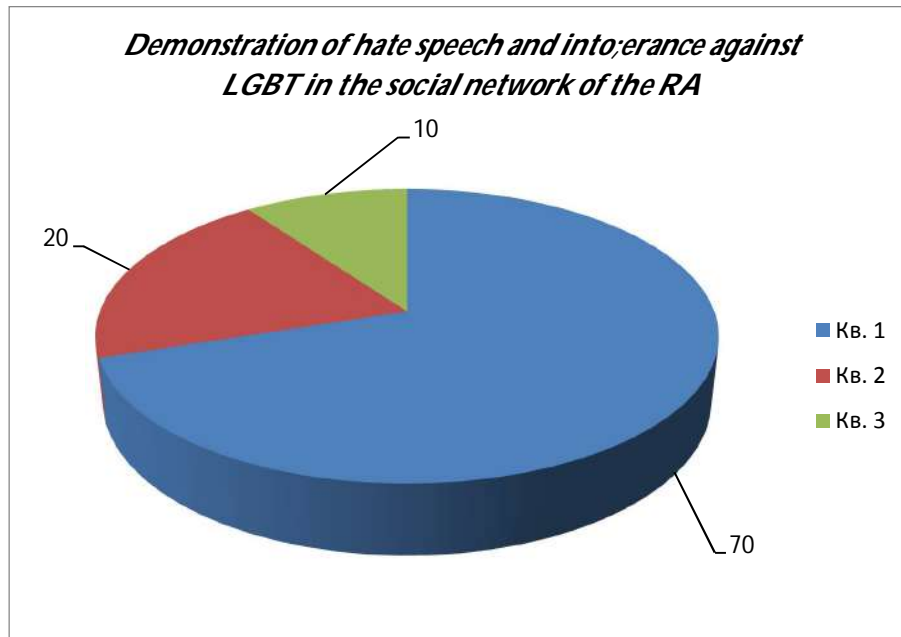
Hate speech and intolerance manifestations from real life appear in the online environment of RA. The first part of the material presented below shows the lack of tolerance towards the LGBT community and insecurity of their rights. The last paragraph shows the explicit state-encouraged cynicism towards the LGBT community and human rights' activists protecting their interests.

### "IRAVUNK" BEAT DEFENDERS OF HOMOSEXUALS

A short while ago according to judge R. Apinyan's verdict at Kentron and Nork-Marash General Jurisdiction Court «Iravunk» won against the defenders engaged in homosexual lobby. The verdict runs: "To reject the obliging claim from the "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO in favor of "Iravunk Media" LLC and for apology by Ilona Azaryan, for partially publication of judicial act and compensation of the caused damage claim."

Note, that the advocates of homosexuals were allegedly offended for the article in "Iravunk" newspaper: "When gay "grant-born" advocates are supported by the state".<sup>10</sup>

They continue to win the "gay advocates" instead of accepting the representatives of LGBT community as full members of the community in Armenia and in the online environment.

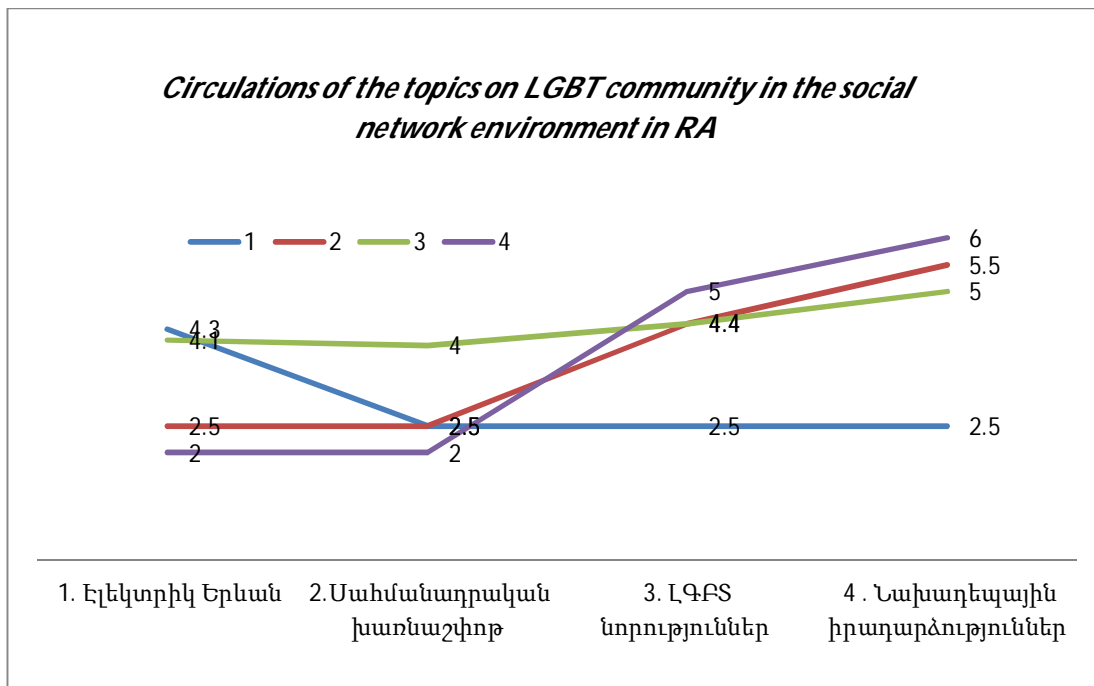


1. 70% of the published materials during the study period contain negative attitude, manifestation of hate speech and violation of human rights, against individuals and organizations displaying acts of tolerance or protecting the interests of the LGBT community.

<sup>10</sup> [http://iravunk.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=31546%3A%3Alr-&catid=41%3Alurer&Itemid=57](http://iravunk.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31546%3A%3Alr-&catid=41%3Alurer&Itemid=57)

2. 20% of the published materials during the study period contain relatively neutral information. These materials are mainly translated from foreign media, mainly from Russian media.
3. 10% of the published materials during the study period are the publications about LGBT community problems with real actors and real facts?

This 50% of this 10% are the messages and materials distributed by NGOs.:



- June-July- **"Electric Yerevan."**
- July-November- **"Constitutional mess."**
- June – November- **Process of LGBT news**
- October-November - Case events /forum dedicated to the protection of LGBT rights, LGBT flag burning, manipulation of the information about the LGBT politician who belonged to the LGBT community and who burned the flag /.



## Conclusion

**This online survey shows that in Armenia the rights of the representatives of LGBT community are not regarded as HUMAN RIGHTS.**

- This study shows that topics related to the LGBT community are being discussed in conjunction with the processes of public importance. During the study period they were activated in direct proportion to of political and civil processes in parallel. On the one hand it means that the LGBT community is an integral part of the community, on the other hand, the evidence shows that by exploiting the different forces as a decoy, to distract public attention.
- One can say that hate speech and intolerance towards the LGBT community have a state protectionism and are supported by MPs and other officials, up to the president's awarding the representatives of mass media, who violate human rights, disseminate intolerance and discrimination.
- The study shows that there is positive progress regarding LGBT problems, dissemination of truthful information and real facts, due to the correct work of organizations and sections defending the interests of the LGBT community / NGOs statements/ and consistent operation of the electronic media LGBTnews.am /The web site operated in July 2014, while the previous study was done in 2014. The activities of the site was evitable when comparing the results of the study /.:

**Lack of law on "Anti-discrimination".** The online environment reflects the LGBT community in more intense colors, as it is easy to hide the person's identity here; it is easy to avoid accountability. Often times it is the media that easily avoids responsibility especially when spreading not the real / fake/ scandalous information in their personal pages, websites, in blog sections. It is one thing, when a citizen expresses his views and opinions, and another thing when the media instead of presenting different opinions disseminates misinformation and hate speech.

There are wrong stereotypes in the public on "Anti-discrimination" law. When they discuss this topic they display highly stereotypical approach. Many people say they want homosexuality to be disseminated and people lose human values and the country, lose the Armenian culture. This is actually the result of a wrong propaganda, because so many things are presented in a wrong way by the media; what the discrimination is, discrimination attitude towards homosexuals, etc.

The absence of anti-discrimination law provides an opportunity to each citizen, the media to hurt the LGBT community, abuse a number of rights violating the freedom of speech, religion, personal privacy and other laws.

Press-conference on the importance of the law.

<http://media-center.am/hy/1448385226>

## Suggestions

1. Continue activities directed to raising awareness on LGBT problems through online platforms.
2. To start special work with media representatives for them to present the problems of LGBT persons in a correct way.
3. Increase the activities directed to the adoption of "Anti-discrimination" law.



This study was compiled based on the materials appearing in the Internet or transported to media platform from the Internet from about 50 media sources / mostly from websites, newspapers, television and radio sites/ or web sites of various NGOs. Often some materials from the social networks are disseminated among the media, then, undergoing new thematic developments, they return to social network again as a media material.

Approximately 8 000 entries and online publications have been studied / articles, videos, photographs, collages and related notes/.

Those materials and records that show manifestations of attitudes, tolerance or hate speech towards LGBTI people and violations of law have been included on the research list.

Selected study materials are the most prominent approaches that represent the situations and views available in the online environment.

No media tolerance list has been drawn up, as it has a very individual approach in Armenia, where media owners are often changed, or media is closed / sites are often blocked / or change of editors, e.g. , may lead to drastic changes in manifestations of intolerance and tolerance. There are media intolerance of which is due to the editor's personal intolerance and due to recent phenomenon, state-sponsorship

Since the beginning of the survey contains the note that the discussions on LGBT community in the online environment were held parallel to political and public processes the subheadings often bear the names of those typical public political processes, but each paragraph explains what the relationship with the LGBT community is.

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