



**ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԶԱՆԳՎԱԾՏՆԻԿԱՆ լրատվության միջոցների էթիկայի
ԳԻՏՈՐԳ ՄԱՐՄԻՆ**

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MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

JUDGMENT

On the Complaint of the RA National Assembly Deputy

Lilit Galstyan

Against “The Infamous Lady” Report by Diana Davtyan And

The “Free Communication With Gnel Sargsyan”

Audiovisual Programme

Aired on January 21, 2022 on “Free News” TV Channel

MEO Composition:

Davit ALAVERDYAN
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A. FACTS

1. On January 25, 2022, Media Ethics Observatory received the complaint of the RA National Assembly Deputy Lilit Galstyan against the January 21, 2022 “The Infamous Lady” report (author: Diana Davtyan) and “Free Communication with Gnel Sargsyan” audiovisual programme (author: Gnel Sargsyan) of “Free News” TV channel.

The complainant expects to receive the MEO judgment on the remarks made against her in the above-mentioned pieces, as well as the behavior of the journalist at the National Assembly.

2. Prior to appealing to MEO, on January 19, 2022, RA NA Deputy Lilit Galstyan had also submitted a complaint to the Commission on Television and Radio (CTR) regarding the programme “Free Communication with Gnel Sargsyan”. On January 27, 2022, the CTR appealed to MEO with a request to receive its position on the remarks voiced in the same programme.

3. According to the complainant, the journalist who authored the report unnecessarily chased her in the NA building, and afterwards made offensive remarks in the report. On the same day, during the programme “Free Communication with Gnel Sargsyan”, remarks discrediting her dignity and reputation were voiced, and false claims were made.

4. On January 29, 2022, MEO informed the TV channel about the complaint.

5. The founders of “Free News” TV channel have signed the Code of Ethics of

Armenian Media and Journalists, thus acknowledging the authority of MEO to review the compliance of their actions and publications with the provisions of the Code, and have expressed their readiness to publish the MEO decision.

6. On February 2, 2022 MEO initiated an online discussion of the complaint.

B. ETHICAL NORMS

I. Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists

1.4. To clearly distinguish facts and information from opinion, comment and analysis.

1.5. To rely on accurate facts and trustworthy information when making analysis and comments.

5.2. Not to promote in any way ethnic or religious hatred and intolerance, or any discrimination on political, social, sexual, and language grounds, exclude hate speech.

6.1. To encourage free exchange of opinions, regardless of any differences between those opinions and the editorial views.

6.2. To be ready to meet with persons or representatives of organizations who feel offended or defamed by a certain publication, and provide an opportunity of response for all those against who criticism and accusations have been made in the publications.

6.3. To admit mistakes and to be ready to correct them.

6.4. To encourage the public to express critical opinions about media and to be ready for a public discourse on matters of journalistic ethics.

C. MEO JUDGMENT

1. Media Ethics Observatory recalls that the free expression of opinion is not an absolute right and can be restricted, in particular, for the purposes of protecting the rights, freedoms, honor and good reputation of others and public peace.

2. MEO supports the internationally accepted view that political and public figures should be more tolerant towards criticism leveled at them. However, those criticisms and evaluative judgments must be based on facts, not leading to insults or hate speech.

3. MEO also recalls that the introduction of a journalist's attitude or opinion in news reports contradicts the universal principles of journalistic ethics.

4. Appreciating the fact that "Free News" TV journalist tried to get the opinion of Lilit Galstyan, a politician who had criticized her media (paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Code), however, taking into account that the issue was of no significance for wider public, MEO considers that the way the reporter was chasing the deputy is incompatible with the ethical conduct of a journalist. Although the persistence of the author of the report was also conditioned by the fact that Lilit Galstyan failed to fulfill her promise to comment later, nevertheless, it does not

justify the violation of the norms of professional ethics by the journalist.

5. Reluctant to disseminate the offensive remarks also with this judgment, nevertheless, MEO believes that the title, style, pathos, vocabulary chosen for the report, and especially the unnecessary underlining of affiliation with a certain political force, the expressions addressed to the MP completely contradict the requirement to exclude discrimination and hate speech on political grounds, as mentioned in paragraph 5.2 of the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists.

6. Based on the above, MEO considers the report in question, as well as the remarks made during the programme “Free Communication with Gnel Sargsyan” on the same incident not as a criticism or merely the author’s opinion, but an attempt to sort out personal relationships through the use of capacities of the media. And this in its turn contradicts the universal principle of avoiding a conflict of interest.

Media Ethics Observatory recalls that the representatives of the media that have signed the Code, acknowledging the authority of MEO, which was elected by them, to review the compliance of their actions and publications with the provisions of the Code, have expressed their readiness to publish the MEO decisions on their media.

Adopted on February 2, 2022

by the following MEO composition:

Davit ALAVERDYAN, Chief Editor of “Mediamax” news agency

Narineh AVETISYAN, Executive Director of Vanadzor “Lori” TV Company

Karineh HARUTYUNYAN, Executive Director of Gyumri “GALA” TV Company

Mesrop HARUTYUNYAN, Media expert

Ara GHAZARYAN, Lawyer

Ashot MELIKYAN, Chairman of Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression

Gnel NALBANDYAN, Chief Editor of “Zham” news program of “Armenia” TV Company, Chief Editor of “Newmag” magazine

Boris NAVASARDIAN, President of Yerevan Press Club

Anzhela STEPANYAN, Editor of Armavir “Alt” TV Company

Gegham VARDANYAN, Producer at Media.am

Media Ethics Observatory was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 69 as of today. In its judgments MEO is guided by Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, adopted at the self-regulation body’s meeting on March 10, 2007, and revised on May 16, 2015