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ԴԻՏՈՐԴ ՄԱՐՄԻՆ**

9B, Ghazar Parpetsi str.
0002 Yerevan, Republic of Armenia
Tel.: +374 10 53 00 67; 53 35 41; 53 76 62
Fax: +374 10 53 56 61
E-mail: meo@ypc.am

MEO Composition:

Davit ALAVERDYAN
Narineh AVETISYAN
Ruben BABAYAN
Shushan DOYDOYAN
Ara GHAZARYAN
Karineh HARUTYUNYAN
Mesrop HARUTYUNYAN
Ashot MELIKYAN
Gnel NALBANDYAN
Boris NAVASARDIAN
Nouneh SARKISSIAN
Anzhela STEPANYAN
Ara SHIRINYAN
Gegham VARDANYAN

**MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY
JUDGMENT
ON THE APRIL 26, 2022 ISSUES
OF “YERKIRN AYSOR” NEWSCAST AIRED
ON “YERKIR MEDIA” TV COMPANY**

Applicant: Commission on Television and Radio

A. FACTS

1. On May 3, 2022 Media Ethics Observatory received letter No. 04-392 and videos from the Commission on Television and Radio (by the decision of MEO, the links of the videos are not publicized).
2. The CTR requested the MEO position on the remarks made by Sayat Shirinyan, police reserve colonel, representative of “Armenia” bloc, and Ishkhan Saghatelyan, Deputy Speaker of the RA National Assembly during “Yerkirn Aysor” newscast of April 26, 2022.
3. On May 17, 2022 Media Ethics Observatory informed the management of “Yerkir Media” TV Company about the complaint.
4. MEO discussed the complaint at its May 18, 2022 session.
5. The discussion continued at the MEO May 25, 2022 session.

B. ETHICAL NORMS

I. Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists

- 4.2. In case of a conflict between the freedom of expression and other fundamental human rights, the media independently decides what to give preference to, and bears responsibility for its decision.
- 5.1. To avoid prejudice against people on the ground of their race, sex, age, religion, nationality, geographic origin, sexual orientation, physical handicap, external look or social status.
- 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.

II. MEO Regulations

4.7. In relation to ethical issues concerning the activities of audiovisual media service providers, the Commission on Television and Radio (according to the RA Law “On Audiovisual Media”) shall be recognized as an appropriate applicant as a state body regulating the sphere, which is also authorized to monitor the observance of professional ethics norms by these media. The appeals received from the CTR shall be reviewed in accordance with the existing procedure. In cases where the dispute concerns a TV or radio company that signed the Code, MEO shall issue a judgment, whereas in other cases an expert opinion or a statement shall be provided.

C. MEO JUDGMENT

Media Ethics Observatory

appreciating that

- the Commission on Television and Radio continues to support the highlighting and strengthening of the media self-regulation initiative in the country with the expectation of receiving the position of Media Ethics Observatory;

viewing

- the CTR appeal as a complaint against the TV Company, which is a member of the Media Self-Regulation Initiative and a signatory to the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists;

having studied

- the videos provided by CTR and having compared their content with the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, as well as with universally accepted legal and ethical rules;

noticing that

- the pieces picked out by the CTR covered mass protest actions;

as well as

- the fact that they broadcast the speeches of Ishkhan Saghatelyan, one of the leaders of the opposition movement, delivered from the stage of the rally;

highlighting

- varying approaches of journalists towards public speeches from the stage of a mass rally and the appropriateness of conducting separate interviews with the participants of these actions for a specific media;

MEO states the following:

- the mentioned pieces contained sharp, rude expressions and assessments that could have been excluded from further dissemination if they had been presented in a pre-recorded format and guided by a certain well-thought-out editorial policy;

however,

- those expressions and assessments did not contain apparent signs of

hate speech or violence, remaining within the boundaries of a sharp political debate, and the issue of their broadcasting is the choice of the authors of the pieces, conditioned by the editorial policy of the media.

Thus,

- MEO did not find any direct violations of the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists in the discussed pieces.

Meanwhile,

- MEO expresses concern over the volume of similar content triggering tension and intolerance within the society and aired on “Yerkir Media” TV Company, which is a consequence of its political bias.

In particular:

- the basis for such a claim is the dissemination of sharp statements through a separate interview with Sayat Shirinyan, representative of “Armenia” bloc, which was specifically taken by the correspondent of the TV Company, not being an immediate element of the covered public event.

MEO finds it necessary to underline that:

- one of its members expressed a special opinion during the discussion, which differs from the MEO overall judgment. In his opinion, a number of remarks in the discussed pieces contained hate speech in violation of Article 5.2 of the above-mentioned Code.

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

***Adopted on November 9, 2022
by the following MEO composition:***

Ruben BABAYAN, Director of Yerevan State Puppet Theater after
Hovhannes Toumanyan

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

Ashot MELIKYAN, Chairman of Committee to Protect Freedom of
Expression

Boris NAVASARDIAN, President of Yerevan Press Club

Ara SHIRINYAN, Chairman of the Council of Public Television and Radio
Company of Armenia

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