



ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԶԱՆԳ-ԱՍՏՆՅԻՆ ԼՐԱՏՎՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԻԳՐԱՆԵՐԻ ԷԹԻԿՍԻ ԴԻՏՈՐԳ ՄԱՐՄԻՆ

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EXPERT OPINION OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

On the complaint of Nuneh Grigoryan, a former employee of the Armenian Red Cross Society, regarding a number of news stories aired on “Armenia” TV Company.

A. FACTS

- On March 21, 2024, Nuneh Grigoryan, the former head of the Information and Dissemination Department of the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), submitted a complaint with Media Ethics Observatory (MEO). Grigoryan informed that between February 14 and March 19, 2024 “Armenia” TV Company’s “Zham” news program had broadcast a series of reports covering the recent developments around the ARCS chairmanship in a one-sided manner. According to the complainant, the author failed to reach out to the other party and did not include their opinion when preparing the mentioned pieces. The accompanying text, in her opinion, exclusively reflected the views of the speaking side, which contained manipulated information, false statements, and insulting remarks by the speakers. The complainant assumed that this biased approach was due to the familial ties between the owner of “Armenia” TV and the former president of the ARCS, Mkhitar Mnatsakanyan.
- After accepting the complaint for review, MEO examined the news stories cited in the complaint (“*The name and reputation of the Armenian Red Cross are in jeopardy,*” “*Mkhitar Mnatsakanyan is the only legitimate president of the Armenian Red Cross Society,*” “*The emotions surrounding the Armenian Red Cross Society are still running high,*” “*The Armenian Red Cross has filed more than 10 crime reports with the police,*” “*Attorney: The Armenian Red Cross Society chairmanship has released a new statement,*” “*Attorney: The State Register has declared that the extraordinary assembly held on behalf of the ARCS is illegitimate.*”) Afterwards, MEO reached out to the involved parties for clarification. The complainant mentioned her reluctance to turn to the ethics ombudsman of “Armenia” TV due to doubts about his impartiality, conditioned by the above-mentioned familial relationship between the leadership of the TV Company and the actual leadership of the ARCS.
- On April 2, MEO Coordinator contacted “Armenia” TV Company, notified them about the complaint and attempted to reach out to the ombudsman of the TV Company to obtain his perspective on the matter. For more than two weeks, “Armenia” TV failed to

ensure communication with the ombudsman, attributing this to his being abroad. On April 22, the TV Company notified that the ombudsman had been dismissed.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS

RA Law “On Mass Communication”

Article 4.1. Implementers of media activity and journalists shall operate freely in compliance with the principles of equality, legitimacy, freedom of speech (expression) and pluralism.

RA Law “On Audiovisual Media”

Article 46.3. The following shall be attached to the application [for the tender for licensing the usage of the public multiplex slot]:

- 5) code of ethics, which shall become a prerequisite in case the license is obtained;
- 6) self-regulation measures ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the code of ethics, which shall become a prerequisite in case the license is obtained.

[Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists](#)

... editors and journalists are obligated:

1.1. prior to publishing, to check the accuracy of information from any source, not to conceal or distort facts, and not to publish obviously false information;

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

3.1. to draw a clear line between journalistic materials and advertisement: each publication which has been paid for must have a relevant notice about it; appropriate labeling should be given to materials from PR services and organizations;

3.3. to resist pressure by advertisers, sponsors, and media owners aimed at influencing the coverage of events. Whenever this sort of pressure threatens to become a public challenge, inform the public about the situation, calling for the support of journalists and the community;

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.

C. MEO EXPERT OPINION

Upon reviewing the pieces cited in Nuneh Grigoryan's complaint against “Armenia” TV Company, MEO states:

- By presenting only one side's viewpoint and evaluations in the news piece in question regarding a legal dispute and failing to include the viewpoint and evaluations of the other side or

unbiased third parties, “Armenia” TV Company has violated Articles 1.1, 1.4 of the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists.

- MEO believes that given the fact of familial relationship between the current leadership of the ARCS and the owner of “Armenia” TV Company, when preparing sensitive news pieces, it was particularly important to maintain impartiality and present all parties’ viewpoints to the fullest extent possible. If that was not possible, they should have refrained from covering the topic.
- Despite being notified of this complaint, “Armenia” TV Company did not show readiness to meet those who felt offended or defamed by the publications in question. The TV Company failed to provide an opportunity for a response to those criticized or accused in those reports, which is considered a violation under Article 6.2 of the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists. Although “Armenia” TV Company has not joined the self-regulation initiative and has not signed the Code, opting for its own method of self-regulation, MEO believes that the TV Company, based on its internal procedures, was obligated to address the complaint.
- Pursuant to Article 46.3 of the RA Law “On Audiovisual Media”, “Armenia” TV Company has chosen the ombudsman institute as a means of self-regulation to ensure journalistic ethics. Nevertheless, within the framework of this case, the ombudsman of the TV Company, in fact, did not respond to MEO’s inquiry, and nearly three weeks later, it was discovered that the individual was no longer serving as the ombudsman of “Armenia” TV. In this regard, MEO highlights that if the ombudsman is on leave or dismissed, and until a new ombudsman is appointed and assumes his/her duties, the procedures for addressing ethical issues remain unclear.

***Adopted on May 13, 2024
by the following MEO composition:***

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[Media Ethics Observatory](#) was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 82 as of today. In its judgments MEO is guided by the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, adopted on March 10, 2007 and revised at the June 25, 2023 general meeting of the media that joined the self-regulation initiative.