



MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY OF ARMENIA

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EXPERT OPINION OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

Regarding the complaint by Hasmik Buniatyan, Co-Founder of “Path of Equality” NGO advocating for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, against “Hraparak” daily’s article titled “This Asylum Has No Director”

A. FACTS

1. On October 22, 2024, Hasmik Buniatyan, Co-Founder of “Pathway of Equality” NGO advocating for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, submitted a complaint to Media Ethics Observatory, regarding an [article](#) titled “This Asylum Has No Director,” published on the website of “Hraparak” daily on October 15. According to the complainant, the piece wholly violated the dignity of persons with mental health problems. “Our society is already steeped in harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about the mental health field, and this piece reaffirms these stereotypes within society,” the complaint specifically read.
2. Upon receiving the complaint, MEO Coordinator reached out to the editorial team of “Hraparak,” inviting them to provide their position or clarifications. In response, the editor-in-chief of “Hraparak” noted that the article in question was a publicistic work, whose author had employed humor aimed at the authorities, and that it bore no relation to people with disabilities or mental health problems.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS

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

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.

II. MEO [Regulations](#)

5.3. Complaints regarding the publications by non-member media of the Self-Regulation Initiative can be reviewed with the media’s consent.

Nevertheless, if the media refuses to grant consent, MEO reserves the right to adopt and publish an expert opinion or a statement, following a review of complaints against the publications by non-member media.

C. MEO EXPERT OPINION

Media Ethics Observatory, having reviewed the complaint filed by Hasmik Buniatyan, Co-Founder of “Path of Equality” NGO advocating for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, against the [article](#) titled “This Asylum Has No Director,” published on the website of “Hraparak” daily on October 15, 2024, and having examined the relevant ethical norms alongside international practices, observes the following:

- Despite being published in the “Politics” section of “Hraparak” daily’s website, the article in question is, in essence, a political satire, where the author, with the help of ridicule, exaggeration, allegory and other publicistic techniques, expressed his position on the current political authorities and specific aspects of their actions, as he saw it. In this context, the repeated usage of the words like “crazy” and “asylum” is not personally targeted and can be considered as not intended to insult or discriminate against people with mental health problems or any particular individual.
- MEO urges media to distinctly label the content produced in genres that stand out from the main news feed (satirical articles, pamphlets, author’s columns, etc.), place them under appropriate headings and sections, and, when necessary, add disclaimers to avoid any confusion.

MEO urges the media to disseminate this Expert Opinion through the channels at their disposal.

***Adopted on December 17, 2024
by the following MEO composition:***

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Ashot MELIKYAN, Chairman of Committee to Protect Freedom of
Expression

Anzhela STEPANYAN, Editor of Armavir “Alt” TV Company

[Media Ethics Observatory](#) was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 85 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 May 18, 2024 general meeting of the media that joined the self-regulation initiative.