



MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY OF ARMENIA

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EXPERT OPINION OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

Regarding the complaint by Aramayis Aghabekyan, a representative of “Power of Mind” scientific and educational NGO, against the social media posts of “Khosnak Lratvakan”

A. FACTS

1. On November 24, 2024, Aramayis Aghabekyan, a representative of “Power of Mind” scientific and educational NGO, submitted a complaint to Media Ethics Observatory regarding a number of posts on the Facebook page of “Khosnak Lratvakan” website. According to the complainant, the channel, through evident manipulations of information, propagated hate speech against the people of Artsakh and contributed to inciting interethnic hostility. The 4 pieces submitted as examples were Facebook reels, three of which contained excerpts from interviews with well-known public figures. These pieces were accompanied by subtitles added to the videos (“Artsakh residents have looted Artsakh, and have now moved on to Armenia,” “Those who live a life of ease in Armenia will never understand Artsakh residents,” “Artsakh residents are now appropriating Armenia”). In another piece, the supposed host gives a speech during some event (“Artsakh residents are still saving Artsakh with toasts”).¹
2. MEO Coordinator tried to reach out to the editorial team of Xosnak.am, but discovered that the website lacked an “About Us” section, information about the editor or content creators, the address of the media's office, or other contact details. The only phone number listed on “Khosnak Lratvakan” Facebook page was unresponsive, and the email sent to the provided address also remained unanswered.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS

I. RA Law “On Mass Communication”

Article 11

1. Every issue of a media product shall include:
 - 1) the name of the media;
 - 2) the full name of the legal entity carrying out media activities, its organizational and legal form, the address of its location, along with the state

¹ Note: Links to “Khosnak Lratvakan” videos are not shared to avoid further dissemination of manifestations of intolerance.

registration certificate number and the date it was issued (or for its separate branch operating in its name). If the media activity is carried out by a natural person, their full name and address are required, and in case the person is an individual entrepreneur, the state registration certificate number and the date of its issuance shall also be provided.

II. Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists

1.6. To ensure that the reports, photo, video and audio materials correspond to the reality, the headlines derive from the content of the material, citations are not used outside of context, and correspondence of the personal data of ordinary citizens with public figures is not abused;

2.4. To respect the copyright, to preclude plagiarism, and to mention the sources whenever quoting or reprinting;

3.5.1. Not to disseminate statements or write posts on social networks that may be perceived as manifestations of racial, gender, religious, political or other discrimination. This also refers to posting photos and videos;

3.5.6. To moderate comments on publications on social network pages of media, if possible deleting entries of an openly offensive nature containing hate speech, calls to violence or other actions prohibited by law;

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;

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.

III. Guidelines on Reporting on Forcibly Displaced Persons from Artsakh

... Any group - national, regional, religious, gender-based, etc. - is united only outwardly. Within these groups, there are always individuals who do not share the views of the majority or the leading, publicly known layer.

Therefore, generalizations should be avoided. Do your best to refrain from including videos/photos in the news piece that may contribute to reinforcing the stereotypes about Artsakh citizens (or any forcibly displaced group).

IV. 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,

due to the necessity of preventing the spread of discrimination or hate speech, examined the complaint submitted by Aramayis Aghabekyan, a representative of “Power of Mind” scientific and educational NGO, against “Khosnak Lratvakan” (which is not a member to the Self-Regulation Initiative), and, after reviewing the reels mentioned in the complaint, identified the following:

- The reels essentially feature excerpts from video content created by other media, accompanied by brief textual comments (1. “Artsakh residents have looted Artsakh, and have now moved on to Armenia”; 2. “Those who live a life of ease in Armenia will never understand Artsakh residents”; 3. “Artsakh residents are now appropriating Armenia”; 4. “Artsakh residents are still saving Artsakh with toasts”).
- The first of the mentioned reels features a quote from an [interview](#) aired on Public Television, where politician Arman Babajanyan, referring to some Artsakh deputies now residing in the Republic of Armenia, says that they are demanding salaries from the RA authorities while having sold state property for personal gain before leaving Artsakh, etc. In response to the journalist’s clarifying question “Who did it?” the guest specifies, “The deputies.” Meanwhile, this part is absent in the reel in question, and especially the accompanying text gives the viewers the impression that the remarks pertain to all Artsakh residents. The reel’s comment section contains numerous negative, hateful remarks about Artsakh residents.
- The statement “Those who live a life of ease in Armenia will never understand Artsakh residents” was made by Anais Sardaryan, an actress from Armenia, during the YouTube [program](#) “Podcut”. Taken out of context, the accompanying text gives the impression that Artsakh residents are reproaching people in Armenia for not understanding their suffering. This perception is further reinforced by numerous negative and hateful comments about Artsakh people under the reel.
- The third reel, accompanied by the caption “Artsakh people are now appropriating Armenia. Why blame Pashinyan? It was the Artsakh residents that fled the fight,” is an excerpt from an [interview](#) with former NKR Defense Army Commander Samvel Babayan. However, it remains unclear where “Khosnak Lratvakan” sourced the text accompanying the short video, as Babayan does not say anything of the sort in his speech.
- The fourth reel is a quote from some event, where presumably the host or an invited actor is giving a speech about Artsakh, with the video titled: “Artsakh residents are still saving Artsakh with toasts.”

Summarizing the above, MEO observes that the media has grossly violated the accepted perceptions of conscientious journalism, and the pieces presented in the complaint contradict a number of provisions of the Code of Ethics, since:

a) the texts accompanying the videos do not derive from the content of the material, the citations were used outside of context (Code of Ethics,

paragraph 1.6);

b) the copyright of the creators of the content used in the reels was not respected, the sources were not mentioned when quoting (paragraph 2.4);

c) the disseminated reels can be perceived as a manifestation of discrimination against Artsakh residents (3.5.1);

d) comments on the posts on the media's social network page were not moderated, entries of an openly offensive nature containing hate speech, calls to violence or other actions prohibited by law were not deleted (3.5.6);

e) the reels contain prejudice against people based on their geographic origin and social status (5.1);

f) the reels disseminate hatred and intolerance, discrimination on political, geographic grounds, as well as hate speech (5.2).

In fact, "Khosnak Lratvakan" has also violated the RA Law "On Mass Communication" by failing to publish contact information that would enable communication with the editorial office. This, at the same time, violates the universal ethical principle of accountability to the public.

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

***Adopted on December 19, 2024
by the following MEO composition:***

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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.