



MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY OF ARMENIA

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EXPERT OPINION OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

Regarding “Hraparak” daily’s article titled “Is Pashinyan Cheating on His Wife?”

A. FACTS

1. On June 6, 2025, an article titled “*Is Pashinyan Cheating on His Wife?*” was published on the eponymous website of “Hraparak” daily. The piece attributed to RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan a defamatory link with one of his alleged former employees. At the same time, the author pointed out that the reason for publishing the article was Pashinyan’s campaign against the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church that had started in those days. “*We would, of course, not have published such a piece if it were not for the head of state’s campaign against the Supreme Patriarch. However, if the number one official allows himself to say, ‘there are such rumors circulating—let the Catholicos refute them,’ we can also pose the same question,*” the article specifically read.
2. On July 4, 2025, RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan filed a lawsuit with the Civil Court of General Jurisdiction of Yerevan against “Hraparak Daily” Ltd., demanding to oblige the defendant to publicly refute the defamatory information in the mentioned article. The plaintiff additionally requested that the court impose a compensation of 1 million AMD on the media for the damage caused through defamation.
3. On July 31, 2025, the Information Disputes Council released its [Opinion](#) on the case, evaluating the article from the standpoint of RA legislation, and expressing its position on whether it was lawful and appropriate for the Prime Minister to file a lawsuit against the media.
4. The IDC also applied to Media Ethics Observatory, requesting an expert opinion from MEO regarding the article's compliance with the norms of journalistic ethics.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS

I. Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

II. RA Constitution

Article 31. Inviolability of one’s private and family life, as well as honor and good reputation

1. Every individual shall have the right to respect for their private and family life, along with their honor and good reputation.

III. 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;
- 1.5. to rely on accurate facts and trustworthy information when making analysis and comments;
- 4.1. to respect and protect the human right to private life, including respect to personal and family life, residence, property, health condition, correspondence. Only public interest or protection thereof can justify publication of information regarding the privacy of high rank officials, public figures, and individuals aspiring to power or public attention;
- 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;
- 6.3. to admit mistakes and to be ready to correct them.

C. MEO EXPERT OPINION

Media Ethics Observatory,

having examined the article in question at the suggestion of the Information Disputes Council,

taking into account the IDC Opinion of July 31, 2025 and having analyzed the information presented in the article published in “Hraparak” daily in the context of the socio-political situation at the time of its release,

presents this Expert Opinion, recording the following:

- The information provided in the article regarding the alleged defamatory link between the RA Prime Minister and a former employee years earlier and other circumstances arising from this allegation are based on anonymous sources. The author failed to present any factual evidence or sources that would substantiate the accuracy of the information or indicate that efforts had been made to verify its authenticity. In this regard, the piece runs contrary to the requirements of paragraphs 1.1, 1.4 and 1.5 of the Code.
- From the wording of the article (“... *we would not have published such a piece if it were not for the head of state’s campaign against the Supreme Patriarch...*”) it becomes clear that in this way the author (the media) attempted to react to Nikol Pashinyan’s public statements regarding the personal lives of the Catholicos of All Armenians and other senior clergy members. In this regard, the information presented in the article with phrases such as “*according to hearsay*”, “*there were rumors*” could be qualified not (or not so much) as factual data, but rather as a mirrored response to the Prime Minister’s statements about the Armenian Apostolic Church elite. This approach aimed to promote public debate on the topic through provocative formulations, exaggerations and allegory. Additionally it was intended to demonstrate how the RA Prime Minister’s public statements regarding the private life of the Catholicos of All Armenians were equally inappropriate as the controversial remarks about the RA Prime Minister’s private life presented in the article, as

emphasized in the IDC Opinion.

- Such a goal may also be regarded as justified from the standpoint of professional ethics, provided that the principle of proportionality is maintained. On the one hand, it is evident to readers familiar with journalistic techniques that the primary goal of the article is not to disseminate facts about Nikol Pashinyan's private life, but to cultivate a critical attitude towards the Prime Minister's conduct that carries public significance. However, it is important for media to consider varying audience perceptions, including the possibility that readers may focus on the alleged factual details. In light of this, MEO believes that to achieve their goal the author of the article chose a method that is disproportionate and unacceptable from the standpoint of journalistic ethics, since they not only targeted the private life of the RA Prime Minister, but also and especially disseminated information that discredits a third person. In this regard, the article in "Hraparak" contradicts paragraph 4.1 of the Code.

Media Ethics Observatory urges the media that have joined the Self-Regulation Initiative to disseminate this Opinion, and expresses its hope that "Hraparak" daily will follow their example.

***Adopted on September 16, 2025
by the following MEO composition:***

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[Media Ethics Observatory](#) was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 94 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.