



MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY OF ARMENIA

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EXPERT OPINION OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

Regarding the complaint submitted by “Zhoghovurd” daily against RA
NA Deputy Arsen Torosyan

A. FACTS

1. On July 9, 2025, Media Ethics Observatory received a complaint from “Zhoghovurd” daily. The complaint stated that several days earlier, “Zhoghovurd” daily reporter Sona Grigoryan had contacted NA Deputy Arsen Torosyan from the “Civil Contract” faction via Facebook Messenger, requesting his comment on information received by the editorial office. Specifically, Grigoryan asked whether it was true that the parents of several missing servicemen had encountered Torosyan near the Government building as he was leaving a meeting with the RA Prime Minister, and some of them had *“attacked the deputy, demanding clarification as to how the DNA tests conducted during Arsen Torosyan’s time in office and with his involvement had turned into a subject of ridicule, referring to an incident in which a parent was given the bones of three separate hands and told that all of them belonged to their missing son. Recalling this and other episodes, one of the parents even grabbed the deputy by the collar and lifted him off the ground.”* Arsen Torosyan told the journalist that he refused to respond to the question specifically from “Zhoghovurd” daily. However, the deputy remarked concerning the details shared by the journalist, stating that *“the daily was either supplied with false information, or it invented the false information itself, as is often the case.”* On the same day, Arsen Torosyan [shared](#) on his Facebook page his correspondence with Sona Grigoryan regarding the issue. The complainant expected MEO to evaluate to what extent the official's behavior during the described interaction with the journalist complied with ethical norms.
2. The day following her correspondence with Torosyan, Sona Grigoryan [published](#) her information in “Zhoghovurd” daily and on “ArmLur.am” website under the headline *“Arsen Torosyan Dragged by Collar Near Government Building: The CC Deputy Runs Away,”* thus firmly asserting the authenticity of the information.
3. 20 days after that publication, Arsen Torosyan revisited the topic on his Facebook page, posting a [video](#) most likely taken from the surveillance cameras of the RA Government building that, in his view, proved that the information reported by the media was untrue.
4. Upon receiving the complaint from “Zhoghovurd” daily, MEO Coordinator contacted Arsen Torosyan in writing, informing him about the content of the complaint and suggesting that the deputy provide clarifications and present his viewpoint. Instead of responding to MEO, Arsen Torosyan

made another post on his Facebook page, sharing a [screenshot](#) of the email sent to him by MEO Coordinator.

5. MEO reached out to the Information Disputes Council requesting an examination of the legal aspects of the complaint.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS

I. Constitutional Law on the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly

Article 4. Duties of a Deputy

1. A deputy shall:

...

- 4) observe the rules of ethics for a deputy.

II. RA Law “On Public Service”

Article 21.1. The system of integrity includes the principles of conduct for public officials and public servants, together with the specific rules of conduct that stem from these principles.

Article 25.1. Public officials and public servants shall demonstrate conduct befitting their position. In carrying out their powers, they shall demonstrate politeness toward every individual with whom they interact.

III. RA Law “On Guarantees of the Activities of a National Assembly Deputy”

Article 3. Rules of ethics for a deputy

1. The requirements of this article are applicable both to the exercise of a deputy’s powers and to their conduct in everyday life.

2. The rules of ethics for a deputy are the following:

....

1) to respect the law and abide by the law;

2) to respect the moral norms of society;

....

6) to contribute to the cultivation of trust and respect for the National Assembly through their activities;

7) to demonstrate conduct befitting a deputy in every context and during any activity;

8) to show respect toward political opponents, participants in National Assembly discussions, **journalists**, and all individuals the deputy engages with while exercising their official powers.

IV. [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;

1.6. 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;

2.1. to the extent possible, specify the sources of information;

VI. MEO Regulations

5.4. MEO examines information disputes involving entities officially engaged in the information field, and, when necessary, issues a statement or publishes an expert opinion.

C. MEO EXPERT OPINION

Taking into consideration the public role of RA NA Deputy Arsen Torosyan, including his social media activity, and guided by paragraph 5.4 of the MEO Regulations, Media Ethics Observatory reviewed the complaint submitted by “Zhoghovurd” daily. Having verified and analyzed the facts presented in the complaint, as well as conducted further research on the issue, MEO issues this expert opinion, recording the following observations:

- The Facebook correspondence between a journalist from “Zhoghovurd” daily and a deputy of the National Assembly, aimed at obtaining information that is subject to publication and of public significance, is essentially not private in nature. Consequently, Deputy Torosyan posting the correspondence with Sona Grigoryan on his Facebook page does not conflict with universal ethical principles.
- Nevertheless, considering the emerging tendency of high-ranking officials and state bodies often responding to written inquiries from journalists and editorial offices with public posts rather than formal replies - thereby disrupting the preparation and publication of exclusive journalistic stories - MEO urges these officials and bodies to address all issues with media through direct communication and dialogue, resorting to other measures envisaged by law only when such efforts prove ineffective.
- Deputy Torosyan provided a partial response to the journalist's question, stating that the events described were untrue, and not ruling out that the editorial office *“invented the false information itself, as is often the case.”* In this regard, it should be highlighted that while deputies acting under an independent mandate are not always obliged to answer questions addressed to them, it is desirable to explain to the public the reasons for any refusal. At the same time, the tone and content of the response clearly demonstrate that the deputy failed to display restraint and courtesy, unreasonably generalizing the specific case, accusing the editorial office of “inventing” lies and frequently employing this approach, which may be qualified as a deliberate insult.
- In any case, a public official - including a National Assembly deputy - irrespective of personal attitudes toward a media or journalist, must communicate with courtesy, rule out any offensive remarks and labels, as required by the RA laws cited above. RA NA deputies, like any other citizen, have the right to resort to legal, judicial and/or extrajudicial means to protect themselves against unscrupulous reporting, including the right to a refutation or response.
- To prove the accuracy of his claims on the issue, Arsen Torosyan posted a video on his Facebook page, which was apparently obtained from Government surveillance cameras. MEO urges Arsen Torosyan and the relevant executive authorities to inform the public

regarding the grounds and procedure by which the video came into Torosyan's possession, whether its publication is legally permissible, and whether the video is complete, especially since users on Facebook, the deputy's preferred platform for communication, raised this question.

- MEO expresses its perplexity over Deputy Arsen Torosyan's [post](#) in response to the email sent by MEO Coordinator. The alleged lack of knowledge regarding MEO's activities does not provide a basis for making ironic judgments about the self-regulatory body. In a democratic society, it is essential for representatives of the authorities to show due respect for civil society institutions and initiatives, including media self-regulatory bodies.

With regard to the article in question published in "Zhoghovurd" daily, MEO observes that:

- The [piece](#) published under the headline "*Arsen Torosyan Dragged by Collar Near Government Building: The CC Deputy Runs Away*," runs contrary to the provisions of paragraphs 1.1., 1.6., and 2.1. of the [Code](#) of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists. Although the author of the piece tried to verify the accuracy of the information obtained from her source prior to publication, she nevertheless disregarded Deputy Torosyan's response that the information was untrue, chose a headline asserting its authenticity and described the entire problematic story without further reasonable attempts to verify the source's information. Moreover, the journalist did not substantiate the necessity for maintaining the source's anonymity either.
- MEO delegated the preparation of a more detailed conclusion on the legal aspects of the outlet's complaint to the Information Disputes Council. Following its examination, the IDC specifically [noted](#) that "in the course of his interaction with the journalist, the NA deputy displayed conduct that is incompatible with the principles of respectfulness and objectivity forming part of the integrity system prescribed by the RA Law "On Public Service," the latter of which is also reflected in the aforementioned provisions of the RA Law "On Guarantees of the Activities of a National Assembly Deputy."
- At the same time, the IDC also found it appropriate to refer to the piece published in "Zhoghovurd daily" and on "ArmLur.am" website and provide an expert opinion, which read: "the piece published in *Zhoghovurd* daily and on *ArmLur.am* contained defamatory expressions that tarnished Arsen Torosyan's dignity. The contrary may be claimed if the journalist succeeds in proving the veracity of the information contained in the article. The information published about Arsen Torosyan was not conditioned by an overriding public interest either in its context or in its content, and the journalist should have taken additional reasonable measures to check the authenticity and soundness of the data available to her."
- MEO expresses the hope that this Expert Opinion will serve as an occasion for representatives of the RA state bodies to derive appropriate conclusions in the area of public communication.

MEO recalls the provision of its Regulations, requiring members of the Self-Regulation Initiative - such as “Zhoghovurd” daily in this case - to publish the specific parts extracted from this expert opinion that relate to violations of the Code, without adding any editorial remarks and notify MEO by providing a link to the particular publication.

***Adopted on August 21, 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 91 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.