



MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY OF ARMENIA

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EXPERT OPINION OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

Regarding the complaint submitted by Davit Akhtoyan against journalist Lia Sargsyan's Facebook post titled "Law Enforcement Officers Have Extracted the Phone Messages of Akhtoyan's Sister-in-Law" and its reprints in the media

A. FACTS

1. On October 8, 2025, citizen Davit Akhtoyan submitted a complaint to Media Ethics Observatory against a piece titled "Law Enforcement Officers Have Extracted the Phone Messages of Akhtoyan's Sister-in-Law." According to the complainant, the information contained in the article is untrue and insults his personal dignity and that of his family.
2. The content challenged by the complainant is, in essence, a Facebook post by journalist Lia Sargsyan. Citing her sources in the law enforcement system, she shared information concerning the situation in Parakar community that unfolded in past weeks, which, in particular, contains details of a discrediting nature regarding the private lives of specific individuals. The piece was reprinted by a number of media platforms (namely, *mamul.am*, *aravot.am*, *aysor.am*, *pastinfo.am*, and *asekose.am*).
3. Upon receiving the complaint, MEO Coordinator contacted Lia Sargsyan and learned that she had made the Facebook post in question in her capacity as a journalist and representative of "Ishkhanutyun" media outlet, which was at that time in the preparation stage before its publication.

B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS

II. 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;
- 1.3. to demonstrate a responsible approach to the dissemination of information taken from social networks or new media, to be sure to mention whether it is verified, reliable, or subject to further verification;
- 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; 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. EXPERT OPINION

Media Ethics Observatory, **taking into consideration** the fact that:

- Lia Sargsyan made her Facebook post in her capacity as a journalist and positions herself as a representative of a media outlet,
- a number of news websites reprinted the post either verbatim or with their own analyses and comments,

has reviewed the complaint submitted by Davit Akhtoyan and, after examining the disputed content, **records** the following:

1. The post titled “Law Enforcement Officers Have Extracted the Phone Messages of Akhtoyan’s Sister-in-Law” contradicts multiple provisions of the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists. Specifically:

- a)** The journalist/media outlet failed to verify the accuracy of the information obtained from their source prior to publishing it. At the very least, the post does not indicate that any verification was conducted. In this sense, the publication runs contrary to paragraph 1.1 of the Code.
- b)** Multiple media platforms published the information shared by Lia Sargsyan on their websites without checking whether the information was accurate or was subject to further verification, which runs contrary to paragraph 1.3 of the Code.
- c)** In addressing the topic, several media platforms offered their analyses and comments based on Lia Sargsyan's post, which runs contrary to paragraph 1.5 of the Code.
- d)** The piece in question contains information concerning the private life and dignity of identifiable citizens, which tarnishes their reputation. In this sense, the dissemination of the post runs contrary to paragraph 4.1 of the Code, which establishes the obligation of editorial offices and journalists to protect the right to private life, including respect to personal and family life, residence, property, health condition and correspondence.
- e)** The author of the piece failed to provide the individual(s) concerned with an opportunity to respond to the information of discrediting nature published about them. In this sense, the publication runs contrary to paragraph 6.2 of the Code.

2. MEO observes with concern that both this and several other high-profile pieces containing serious violations of professional ethics referenced information obtained from law enforcement agencies. Without assessing whether a “leak” from law enforcement actually occurred in this case, MEO believes that information obtained in such a manner does not provide justification for journalists to disseminate content of discrediting nature about citizens' private lives, and calls for prudence, delicacy, and responsibility in handling such leaked data.

3. MEO calls on the media that disseminated the post, whether or not they have joined the self-regulation initiative, to share this Opinion on their respective platforms.

*Adopted on October 22, 2025
by the following MEO composition:*

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Arevik SAHAKYAN, Executive Director of "Factor TV"

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Ashot MELIKYAN, Chairman of Committee to Protect Freedom of
Expression

Narineh AVETISYAN, Executive Director of Vanadzor "Lori" TV Company

Media Ethics Observatory was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 95 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.