

SIDE EVENT AT THE OSCE ODIHR HDIM 2016**ARMENIA: RIGHT TO PROTEST AND STATE REPRISALS, 2015-2016**Tuesday, 20 September, 2016
13:00-14:45, Meeting Room 2**Daniel Ioannisyan, Founder of the “Union of Informed Citizens”****Excessive Police violence during peaceful protests of July 2016 in Armenia**

From 17-30 July, 2016, the resistance of the armed group in the police station in Yerevan’s Erebuni district against the police forces was accompanied by solidarity protests and police repressions against them. 700 civilians were detained without any grounds and around 100 people were hospitalized after police used excessive force and special means against the demonstrators.

Detained persons

According to the official letters, received by the “Union of Informed Citizens” from Armenian Police, and latter’s public statements, 775 civilians were detained in the period of July 17 to August 4 in Yerevan and other major cities. However, this is a minimum figure, as far as there is reliable information on detention cases not reflected in the police statistics.

198 out of 775 citizens were taken to the military bases of the police troops though this is strictly forbidden by Armenian law. Almost all the persons detained both in police departments and military units were kept longer than the defined 3 hours (up to 32 hours) without right to call, lawyer and food.

Majority of civilians were detained without specific charges. Nevertheless, 47 people were formally charged and imprisoned. Half of them were released in several days, few of them were imprisoned for several weeks, while but more than 20 peaceful protesters are still held on remand.

There were number of reliable reports on cases of violence and even torture in police departments (or on the way there). Journalists and human rights defenders have recorded dozens of cases, when citizens who left police stations had obvious traces of violence on their bodies and even serious injuries. Several citizens were also reporting cases of humiliating treatment.

Special means and victims

On July 20 and 29 police used tear gas and stun (flashbang) grenades against peaceful protests. In particular, police used 3 shots of tear gas, 26 shots of 40 mm flash-bang grenades “Svirel” and 71 hand flash-bang grenades. It is also worth to mention that special measures were applied not only with breach of Armenian law, but also with violation of regulations for providing safe use of those measures for human health.

On July 29 dozens of people in civilian clothing attacked and severely beat the demonstrators (with the permission of police). According to reliable press publications, the group of attackers was partly comprised of policemen and partly from criminals.

Only during these two days 33 civilians received fractures, 47 had shrapnel wounds, 7 civilians had burns, one citizen poisoning from tear gas, and another (underage) lost his eye. The total number of citizens who applied for medical assistance was 101, while dozens of citizens refused to seek medical treatment.