

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 4

Fundamental Freedoms I

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As delivered by

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Mr. Moderator,

Two days ago Armenia celebrated the Day of Independence. Armenian people achieved independence through claiming and exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly freedom of peaceful assembly. It turned to become an unprecedented national mobilization asset.

I would like to seize this opportunity to present our recent national practice in this regard. Armenia closely cooperated with the ODIHR and Venice Commission to produce an appropriate law governing peaceful assembly.

Yet it is one thing to have good laws and another to implement them efficiently on the ground given the reality of different situations that may arise during demonstrations and rallies. Apparently, not each and every situation can be prescribed by legislation and thus training of police is essential.

Recently, Armenia undertook important police reforms in close cooperation with the OSCE and its Yerevan Office. The demonstrations and rallies, that took place in Armenia in June and July in connection with protest against rise of utility tariffs, have been important test for assessing efficiency of police reforms. In our view, in spite of certain shortcomings, the Police performed well in extremely challenging environment. Closing a central avenue and camping next door to Government Buildings for weeks constitute challenging environment for every participating state. Under these circumstances, the Police managed and created conditions for continued peaceful assembly after June 24th events. The improved performance of the Police was widely recognized in the OSCE.

When it comes to freedom of association, we see the emergence of strong and vibrant civic movements in various fields in Armenia. Armenia does not impose any restriction on the activities of NGOs and we are more than happy to see Armenian NGOs here regardless whether we agree or disagree with their assessments.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the point I made earlier in the opening remarks. My delegation would not entertain organizations which are created to occupy the place of imprisoned civil society. We really regret that, as a result of human rights crackdown in Azerbaijan, persons who eulogized the ruling dynasty in previous HDIM became “human rights advocates” and murderers are presented by them as “human rights activists”.

Thank you.