

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
WORKING SESSION 3
Freedom of the Media
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As delivered by

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Mr. Moderator,

I would like to thank distinguished panelists for their informative presentations. At the last session, my delegation has already presented the current state of freedom of media in Armenia. Now I would like to concentrate on two issues which were put forward in the Annotated Agenda.

First let me elaborate on reporting on sensitive issues.

The right to the truth particularly in its dimension of right to know the truth should be a reference point for approaching sensitive issues. In the contemporary society journalists and other media workers serve as significant agents of communication and it is not accidental that on certain cases they face severe restrictions on realization of their right to know the truth and reporting it to the public.

The law on denigration of state or nation is often used to restrict the right to know the truth as any attempt to objectively refer to the past events can be punished.

In our view, freedom of expression does not impede but assist rehabilitation of victims of past grave human rights violations and thus it should be safeguarded.

The freedom of expression is essential in protecting people residing in conflict areas from massive and grave human rights violations. Any attempt to deny access of journalists and other media workers to conflict areas could be recognized as early warning sign, since all premediated mass atrocities including genocide had been preceded by determined efforts to prevent communication and isolate future victims.

There is no any way to reveal the truth without being and seeing it on the ground. The criminalization of the visits of journalists and other media workers to the conflict areas is attack against freedom of expression and it shows weakness not strength of the Governments using this tool as it reveals their fear of truth. The attempts to hide behind arguments of status of territories is a lame excuse. Human rights applicable to all territories regardless of their status as it is also stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In conclusion, we would like to submit two recommendations.

First, we recommend the Office of the RFOM to recognize as early warning sign attempts to criminalize visits of journalists to the conflict area and report on it.

Second, we recommend that all participating states and relevant authorities ensure unimpeded access of journalists and media workers to conflict areas and refrain from criminalizing activities of journalists and media workers therein.

Thank you.