

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

WORKING SESSION 1

Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of expression, freedom of media and information

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As delivered by

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Mr. Moderator,

I would like to start by warmly welcoming Mr. Harlem Desir, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to HDIM and thank him for his first important contribution and guidance in framing discussions here.

We subscribe to the view that freedom of expression is not merely one of fundamental freedoms. It remains the best indicator of overall situation of human rights in the given participating state.

The freedom of expression is essential in addressing propaganda of war and hatred and 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.

The criminalization of the visits of journalists to the conflict areas is illegal practice. The case of Alexander Lapshin is a case in point and such a violent reprisal against freedom of expression should not be repeated.

We urge the RFOM to pay particular attention to the freedom of expression and mass media in the environment of existing conflicts.

Armenia has passed a long way to ensure current level of freedom of expression also by decriminalizing libel and regulating financial fees. But our journey did not stop here and we stand ready to work closely with RFOM and his able team in furthering our common achievements.

In conclusion, we would like to submit two recommendations.

First, 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.

Second, we recommend the Office of the RFOM to collect good practices on creating conditions for unimpeded work of journalists and media workers in conflict areas and conflict environment

Thank you.