

Brussels, 22 August 2016

Monitoring Mission of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on the civil society, media and human rights situation in Armenia

Summary of activities

The Monitoring Mission of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on the civil society, media and human rights situation in Armenia (the Mission) visited Armenia during the period of 9-15 August 2016.

The Mission's team was composed of leading experts in the field of human rights from Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The Mission's work was supported by the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform.

The Mission's main objectives were to assess the situation with non-governmental organizations and media in the aftermath of the political crisis during the period of 17-31 July 2016, acquire the complete and accurate information about the situation in particular fields of human rights both currently and during the crisis, such as: arbitrary detentions, inhuman treatment and torture, access to justice and legal aid.

During the visit to Armenia, the Mission held meetings and thoroughly discussed the situation with the representatives of civil society, leading human rights organizations, experts and lawyers, who have taken upon themselves the protection of those arrested during the events of 17-31 July. Separate meetings were held with the Ombudsman of the Republic of Armenia and with the representatives of major intergovernmental organizations. In the framework of the Mission, first-hand accounts of those who participated in the events, including journalists, were collected. Moreover, public statements and documents of Armenian government agencies' representatives, reports of human rights organizations (including international ones) and expert opinions were analysed. Currently, the Mission is preparing the report and a wide range of recommendations to be submitted in the near future both to the Steering Committee of the Forum and to the general public.

At the same time, we consider it necessary to give a brief assessment on the basis of the Mission's work and to present urgent recommendations.

We note that the events of 17-31 July were accompanied by disproportionate use of force by law enforcement and serious violations of human rights:

- arbitrary detention, retention of people in the military facilities without drawing up protocols, both during and after detention and retention;
- attacks on journalists, interference with the performance of their professional duties; cruel and degrading treatment, restriction of access to adequate medical care, illegal intrusion on the private property; denial of the right to a phone call, etc.

To date the names and detention locations of all those arrested are determined, and the information about their health status, detention conditions and access to legal aid is being received.

In the aftermath of the crisis on 17-31 July, Armenian civil society makes every effort to protect citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms. Armenian civil society is consistent in collecting reliable information about the events of 17-31 July and the scope of civil rights violations during the protests, helping to restore citizens' rights, providing assistance, including legal aid, to the victims and their families.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (especially human rights organizations) coordinate their activities, seeking to maximize performance of the human rights related tasks, including the provision of legal assistance for all the victims. It should be noted that the legal community of Armenia has taken upon themselves the provision of the legal aid to the arrested and detained.

We support the previously adopted statement of the Armenian National Platform as of 21 July 2016 and that of the [Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum as of 1 August 2016](#), and urge the Government of Armenia to take immediate measures in order to restore the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the atmosphere of trust between the state and society:

- **Release all detained participants of the peaceful protests, including the Steering Committee Member Hovsep Khurshudyan and active member of the EaP CSF Davit Sanasaryan;**
- **Investigate all cases of violence against civilians, bring to justice those responsible for violations of human rights and freedoms. Particular attention should be paid to the transparency of the process: providing human rights organizations with access to the information regarding the investigation, informing the public about the course of investigation and measures taken for its quality conduct.**
- **Investigate the two cases of murdered police officers with the assistance of international experts;**
- **Provide guarantees of safety for journalists and media activists during the performance of their professional duties;**
- **Ensure the safety of lawyers and human right activists' activity, promote the protection of human rights.**

We draw the attention of international organizations and donor community to the fact that under the current circumstances Armenian civil society (especially organizations, which undertook the functions of restoring and protecting citizens' rights and freedoms) is in need of additional support. Human rights defenders and lawyers should be provided with everything needed as soon as possible.

*Members of the Monitoring Mission of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
on the civil society, media and human rights situation in Armenia*