

The Status of Human Rights Defenders in Armenia



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The Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Armenia

- In its last UPR in January 2020, Armenia accepted all recommendations specific to human rights defenders (HRDs).
- Challenges remain in many areas with respect to guaranteeing the freedom and security of HRDs.

Key Issues Faced by Human Rights Defenders

- Hostility from political and media actors
- Lack of government support for HRDs
- Threats from radical opposition and far-right groups
- Misinformation and attacks on civil society organizations
- Police brutality and lack of accountability

Right to Life, Liberty & Security



- Excessive force used by law enforcement
- Arbitrary detentions of protesters
- Lack of prosecution for police brutality
- Rising political violence and hate speech

Recommendations

- Ensure law enforcement officers are held accountable for disproportionate use of force and violations of human rights during protests, by conducting thorough, independent investigations and prosecuting those responsible for police brutality.
- Foster a balanced approach to managing assemblies by promoting de-escalation training for police officers and establishing clear protocols to protect the safety of protesters, journalists, and the general public.
- Promote and safeguard the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of assembly while ensuring that democratic principles are upheld, and that violence, whether by law enforcement or protest groups, is condemned and prosecuted.

Threats Against Human Rights Defenders

- Online and offline harassment of HRDs
- False criminal charges and lawsuits against activists
- Intimidation by nationalist and political groups

Recommendations:

- Carry out an independent prompt, effective and impartial investigation into attacks on human rights defenders and end the atmosphere of impunity against human rights defenders.
- Register and compile statistics of threats and attacks against human rights defenders, along with information relating to their investigation and rates of prosecution.

Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)

- Used to silence journalists, activists, and environmental activists,
- Cases against media outlets and environmental activists
- Chilling effect on free speech and activism
- Lack of judicial protection against SLAPPs

Recommendations:

- Strengthen judicial training on SLAPP cases to ensure that judges can recognize and dismiss these abusive lawsuits promptly.
- Ensure that public officials and political figures refrain from using the legal system to suppress criticism and engage in constructive dialogue with civil society.

Thank you

**from all the members of Human Rights House
Yerevan:**

- PEN Armenia
 - Pink human right defending NGO
 - Real World, Real People NGO
 - Sexual Assault Crisis Center NGO
 - Socioscope NGO
 - Women's Resource Center NGO
- And Human Rights House Foundation

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