

DIVERSITY 2016

MASS MEDIA AWARD



**ALONG WITH
TIME**

Special Issue

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“DIVERSITY – 2016” Mass Media Award Ceremony was held in Yerevan

On April 6, 2017 “New Generation” Humanitarian NGO organized LGBTQI issues-related “DIVERSITY-2016” mass media annual award.

Through organization of the award “New Generation” Humanitarian NGO aimed to speak up about issues of violations of rights of LGBTQI people through building a dialogue among journalists and representatives of international institutions and civil society, as well as to emphasize the importance of ethically correct approach by journalists in writing about cases of violation of rights of LGBTI people.

GREETING SPEECHES WERE DELIVERED BY NORWEGIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE LENE WETTELAND, AMBASSADOR OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO ARMENIA MR. PETR MIKYSKA, AND AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO ARMENIA MR. BERNHARD MATTHIAS KIESLER.

The conference was also attended by representatives from Lithuanian, French and British embassies, Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, USAID Armenia office, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Chamber of Advocates of Armenia, Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia, human rights defender organizations and journalists.





Afterwards NNGO representative Arman Sahakyan presented the results of LGBTI issues related “DIVERSITY-2016” Mass Media Award.

The goal of the Mass Media Award was to unite the potential of journalists from 10 regions of Armenia and Yerevan who address LGBTI related issues and encourage them.

The assessment committee members were Yuri Manvelyan, editor of Epress.am, expert Anna Nikoghosyan and journalist Sureh Deheryan.

The best journalistic material was evaluated by the following criteria: impartiality, urgency of the theme, rendering form, literacy, versatility, comprehensive presentation, journalism ethics, and content.

The article by Kyle Khandikyan and Nana Shakhnazaryan, “The Accepted Ones: Parents Support Their Gay Children”, which was published on “As You” website in 2016, won the prize.

The author of the article thanked “New Generation” Humanitarian NGO for creating this ceremony which promotes professional and objective media coverage of LGBTI related issues.

The articles by Lilit Arakelyan (“To beat-burn Violence against homosexuals is encouraged “from above”, “Eliminate, burn, slaughter:

When hate speech in the media is seen behind the shadows”) and Alina Nikoghosyan (“Harsh Reality: “Negative stereotypes” blamed for ill-treatment of LGBT in Armenia”) were given encouragement awards.



SERGEY GABRIELIAN PRESIDENT OF "NEW GENERATION" HUMANITARIAN NGO OPENING REMARKS

Honourable Ambassadors, Dear Guests,

Thank you for accepting the invitation to our event.

As a Human Rights Organisation, “New Generation” Humanitarian NGO has adopted a very important path, that is to promote the protection of the rights and interests of people, particularly LGBTQI people, to support the implementation of international commitments in the field of human rights protection assumed by the Republic of Armenia.

In this regard, we, particularly, provide legal consultancy, compile legal documents, provide representation in courts and applicable bodies and strategic litigation, we perform legislative analyses and develop corresponding suggestions, conduct monitoring in closed as well as non-closed institutions, provide temporary shelters and realize different events of public awareness-raising.

It is a pity that the Armenian Government is not willing to fight together with the civil society against the violation of LGBTQI people rights and against the discrimination they face. And it's an even more pity that the Armenian media very often distorts the reality and becomes the reproducer of the existing discrimination, stigmatizing and hate speech against LGBTQI people.

And in this respect, we give great importance to the support of international diplomatic and other institutions, which has a direct impact on the development of tolerant atmosphere and, moreover, development of democratic values in Armenia.

Lene Wetteland Norwegian Helsinki Committee Welcoming speech

In many places tolerance and diversity are more imperative in schools and politics. Gender diversity seems to be exempt from this discourse.

How we speak about gender, gender roles and sex characteristics in schools, media and society is very important, since it has a large impact on the opportunity for non-binary or gender diverse, as well as LGBTI people to exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms.



Challenging the dominant narrative for a journalist can be difficult. Also In Norway, as well as in Armenia changing opinions can be difficult. Nevertheless, some people do it and do it from the regional perspective. Stories told by journalists, that write against hatred and ignorance, changed something and we still remember them. Making information available is very important in a way that it allows for people to make up their own opinions. A harsh climate of transphobic and homophobic attitude does not allow for the freedom of forming opinions.

It only reproduces hatred and disinformation. Thus, encouragement is important and we are very glad that we have been able to support this project.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic in Armenia Honorable Mr. Petr Mikyska Welcoming speech

Thank you and congratulations to "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO and Norwegian Helsinki Committee for this wonderful contest because it is unique and deserves our applause.

When I came to Armenia in May 2012, I was shocked with first events: there was an attack to a gay friendly bar, there was an arson in the same place and a shooting in gay community.

Since 1993, Armenia signed and ratified the International Covenant on Social and Political right and most of UN, OSCE, Council of Europe conventions, treaties and other documents. To my surprise, all these documents are only a piece of paper for the politicians. They obey hate speech calls from the scum instead of promoting respect for the law, legislation and international commitments, instead of promoting protection of their own citizens. We are trying to support individuals and organizations and we really cherish the role of the civil society in people's awareness raising, conquering the space, freedoms and rights of the LGBT community.



Nevertheless, this can not be done without media; media is a very important vehicle for transferring a respectful attitude and patterns to the population, and slowly changing their behavior. Let me thank and congratulate the organizers for this event, for the contest and to express my hope that the contest will really help to realize this great task.



**Ambassador
Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of
the Federal
Republic of
Germany in Armenia
Honorable Mr.
Matthias Kiesler
Welcoming speech**

Thank you very much that I am again invited to this kind of conferences which are very important to talk about specific issues on LGBT life, discrimination and hate speech.

I personally and the German government fully support any activities against discrimination in Armenia.

It is important that you have freedom of speech on political, as well as on LGBTI issues in Armenia.

Fortunately, there is no mainstream opinion, but of course there are limits on the freedom of speech, and there is distribution of wrong information, slander and hate speech.

We all are waiting that anti-discrimination law, as well as the law against domestic violence will be finally passed. Soon we will have a new government and a new parliament. I hope they will take all their energy to work on these laws.

The attitude and approach of the society should also be slowly changed. In Germany it took a long time. Until 1969 sexual intercourse of men was not only forbidden but it could risk a number of years to be in prison. It takes some time but it is not an excuse.

You have to be careful also with the media, because sometimes they are not fully independent.

It's important to have a strong media and also strong individual journalists. I can only encourage all journalists, at least, to tackle this issue in a very fair manner, to be critical about these issues and not to repeat the misinformation which is floating around.

I welcome the fact that you have a strong media and also strong individual journalists who can make a difference with coverage of these topics.

I advise media representatives to become more aware of this issue and disseminate it in fair manners.

Hayk Hayrapetyan
Civil Lawyer of "New Generation"
Humanitarian NGO
Subject: "Violation of LGBTQI people's rights
in 2015-2017"

In the scope of the legal consultancy provided by "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO to LGBTQI people we came to conclusion that there are a number of obstacles faced by the community. Particularly cases of violations of human rights of LGBTQI people are latent, because they avoid to apply to the relevant law enforcement agencies for various reasons.

First, the lack of anti-discrimination law which is a serious legislative gap. Then LGBTQI people do not trust law enforcement agencies, the judicial process and system. Also, state institutions have a biased attitude to LGBTQI people. The next biggest issue is the low level of awareness of the community. LGBTQI people are not aware of their rights, as well as protection mechanisms. They have poor knowledge on what kind of state institutions or non-governmental organizations are authorized to protect their rights, or what kind of bodies, people or human rights organizations are eligible to protect their rights at local and international levels.



Ara Gharagozian
Criminal Lawyer of "New
Generation" Humanitarian
NGO
Subject: "Violation of
LGBTQI people's rights in
2015-2017"

State bodies, the police, public prosecution and special investigations agency conceal the discrimination-based cases, moreover, they support the police officers who abuse LGBT people. And in case a criminal case is launched, it is shortly dismissed. There are also cases when LGBT people are scared to push the case through. State bodies do not want to admit the fact that there must not be any discrimination against LGBT people.



By my own experience, I can state that during trials, judges laugh and mock at the fact that the person has been discriminated based on his/her sexual orientation. Besides, lawyers protecting the rights of LGBT people are called "Defenders of Perverts".

So we have a lot of work to do in order to retrain these judges, prosecutors and investigators so as they can see and understand that we protect the rights of people and not "perverts".

Maro Khachatryan
Strategic Litigation lawyer, "New Generation"
Humanitarian NGO
Subject: "Strategic Litigation Issues of LGBT
People's Rights Protection"



Since 2014 a number of legal proceedings on the protection of lawyers and legal institutions dealing with homosexual/LGBT people's rights and their issues, have been started through "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO.

In the civil sphere, that protection was aimed at the compensation for the damage caused to the honor and dignity of advocates, which particularly brought up the issue of compensation for the damage caused by discrimination and hate speech. Taking into account the fact that there is no separate law on anti-discrimination in the RA legal system, here the RA Civil Procedure Code comes in effect, according to this Code each party bears the load of proving the facts brought forward by him/her. Consequently, a general investigation of the case was carried out and the court denied the claim for the damage caused by discrimination and hate speech but upheld the claim in part in terms of defamation and insult.

There was another case on the hate-preach against "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO related to its protection activity of LGBT people's rights. The Court found that the disputable statements, objectively, i.e. in and of themselves, preached hatred, however, it released them from responsibilities regarding it as an expression of opinion. The issue was related to the legislative gap as discrimination and hate-preach which also include discrimination against minorities, is an absolute prohibition, consequently there was a need to record it separately in the regulations of damage caused to the honor and dignity.

We took up this issue to the RA Constitutional Court but the application was denied on the ground of no demand for such a regulatory act. I think that it is possible to come to such an argumentation in case of investigation of the application but not in case of decision of admitting the application.

Arman Gharibyan
Journalist

Subject: "Rights of LGBTQI people in media. how to overcome the obstacle of the editor"



Unfortunately, there are very few editors who encourage the coverage of this topic. The majority of editors say to journalists that there are more important issues in the country, and they should focus on those topics.

Moreover, the those journalists who try to write about LGBTQI issues face pressure from their colleagues . Thus it's important to encourage the journalists who write about the issues of the LGBTQI community in such situations.

Anna Nikoghosyan
Expert
Subject: "Changing discourse about LGBT people in media"



The first discourse I have singled out is that media produces and reproduces a system, where Armenian values and traditions are on one side and LGBT people, as opposed to these values and

traditions, stand on the other side of the system. Very often, these people also become just instruments used in political games.

I call the second discourse LGBT People as violence survivors, which produces and reproduces LGBT people as victims in media.

As a result, LGBT people are deprived of the opportunity to act. We have LGBT people whose struggle, victories are in no way reflected in media.

The next discourse is that LGBT community is introduced as a homogeneous community where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other people and their problems are presented as uniform problems and obstacles. This discourse also re-creates us as others.

Arman Sahakyan
"New Generation" Humanitarian NGO
Diversity and Equality Projects Manager
Presentation of results of "DIVERSITY-2016"
Mass Media Award



The role of the contest is very important because since 2015 it helps to identify and promote articles written about LGBT people's rights in Armenian Media.

Based on our previous experience we tried to be as objective as possible in the assessment process through establishing assessment criteria such as exclusion of discriminatory vocabulary, comprehensiveness, relevance and literacy of the journalistic materials. We are hopeful that journalistic materials of the coming annual contest will be more professional and unbiased, which is already a progress in terms of an objective interpretation of the rights of LGBT people.



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Կազմակերպություն



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