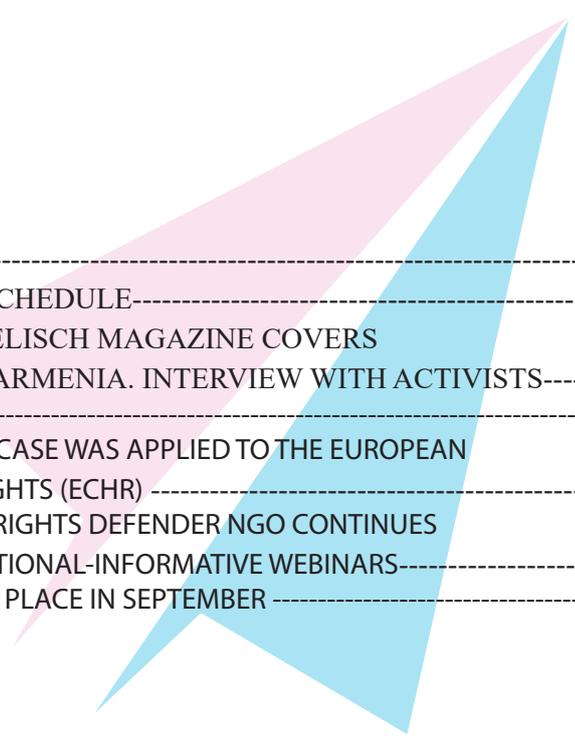


TRANS NEWSLETTER

September - October 2020



No. 14



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TRANS CAMP 5

On August 24-26, 2020 the 5th “Trans Camp” was organized by the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO for Trans LGBTQI+ people, activists fighting for their rights and their allies.

The aim of the training was to promote the educational capacity and mobilization of the transgender community, their active involvement and participation in civic, socio-cultural and social life, be part of the advocacy for the rights of Trans people in families and workplaces, and, of course, combat stigma and reduce discrimination.

The founding president of the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO Lilit Martirosyan made the opening speech on the first day of the training. She expressed her gratitude for participating in the camp, assuring that after the trainings the participants will leave with new knowledge, expectations and perspectives. After that participants introduced themselves and got acquainted with each other. They set the rules for the three-day camp and expressed their expectations and fears during the camp.

On the first day of the camp after the welcoming speech the participants had an active discussion on the topic of “Sexuality”; they got acquainted with the basic concepts of sexuality, such as biological sex, sexual behavior, gender, sexual orientation, got acquainted with the types of sexual orientation and gender, parallel to the main topic the participants learned to think analytically on their own based on public and international experience. The training enriched the participants with vital knowledge, contributed to the building of trust between the participants, as well as the creation of an inter-community network and cooperation. At the end of the day, the participants summed up the knowledge gained with the trainers and Lilit Martirosyan.

The second working day began with the summary of the previous day, also participants learned how to find new ways to collaborate, make fundraising and get resources, make a risk assessment at work, in the family, and most importantly, how to respond to prevent attacks on trans people. At the end of the day, homework groups were formed. The day was evaluated and the gained knowledge was summarized. It is noteworthy that the parents of Trans LGBTQI+ people were present at the camp. Solidarity and trust in the family and other related topics were the main topics of discussion with them. Parents were more closely acquainted with their children's problems resulting in a more empathetic approach to parenting. At the end of the day, homework groups were formed, the day was evaluated and the gained knowledge was summarized.

The third day also began with a summary of the previous day, followed by the creation of a platform for "Community Initiatives" and a discussion chaired by transgender activist Lilit Martirosyan. The latter presented the personal stories of other LGBTQI+ activists working in "Right Side" NGO, the next future steps and encouraged the involvement of new activists and supporter allies in creation and development of community initiatives. Next important topic to be discussed was the importance of security, particularly individual and community security. Participants talked about risk assessment and possible ways to avoid threats.

Lilit Martirosyan mentioned that the Trans camp will be continuous in order to support the mobilization of the community and the formation of self-help groups to create a stronger Trans community in the entire Caucasus region. "The camp will be continuous, as the camps organized over the years have proved to be the best for Trans people, there is a need to continue in the same way. The best proof is that the number of applicants is increasing year by year, for example, this year about eighty people applied for thirty places", said Lilit Martirosyan. The latter also spoke about the psychological health of the activists, self-care, and the burning processes of the activists (burn out). Lilit Martirosyan presented the participants with certificates of participation in the camp, as well as volunteers who were selected and received symbolic gifts for the help to make the best of the camp.

At the end of the training Lilit Martirosyan thanked the organization financing the training, the participants, the trainers, the entire "Right Side" NGO staff, handing certificates to the participants.



Some participants expressed their gratitude and opinion about the Camp.

"I have had many difficulties in my life. The hardest part was when I was locked up at home because of my gender identity. I began to contradict my inner self. It was difficult, of course, but now I'm here and proud to be in a Trans camp where I can share all this with you." - 23 - year - old Trans woman.

"I am 20 years old, everyone is going through difficulties, I am no exception. But in my case, my parents, specifically my mother, was very tolerant of me, accepted me as I was." - Transgender man activist.

"It was just an incredible platform where I met people who shared my problems, now I know that I am not alone in the fight for our rights." - Transgender woman.

"I want such knowledge-based meetings. I wish they are organized more often. Not even being a member of the LGBT community, I understand how knowledge based and important are such meetings for allies"- Trans ally.

The "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO expresses its deep gratitude to the funding organization for support and trust to the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO to carry out the advocacy project for the protection of the rights of transgender people. The "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO also expresses its deep gratitude to all the participants and hopes to see them at the forefront of transgender activists in the near future.

Monthly events schedule

01.09.2020թ. - 30.09.2020թ.

	Event Name	Day	Time
1.1	HIV/AIDS/ Sexually Transmitted infections	15.09	15:00
1.2	How to Advocate for the Right to Health	15.09	16:00
2.1	Our Needs and Discrimination Cases during the Pandemic	16.09	14:00
2.2	Legal Consultation	16.09	16:00
3.1	Right to Health	18.09	16:00
3.2	Legal Consultation	18.09	16:00
4.1	Phobias and Mutual Help	23.09	14:00
4.2	Legal Consultation	23.09	16:00
5.1	What is Self-Stigma and Ways of its Prevention	24.09	15:00
5.2	Legal Consultation	24.09	16:00

#RightSideNGO #Transgender #LGBTIQ #Իրազնուկներ

Dear Trans LGBTIQ+ community, we are happy to inform you, that “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO’s safe and secure space again starts to work actively by organizing events on different topics. In addition, we are providing legal consultation to those Trans LGBTIQ+ people who need it.

Taking into account the pandemic situation in Armenia and highly appreciating the right to health, it is necessary to keep the anti-pandemic rules at Trans LGBTIQ+ safe space during our events by wearing masks, disinfecting hands and keeping social distancing.

“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO within the framework of its new projects and with its new team members is implementing educational-informative projects, consultations, events for awareness raising of the Trans LGBTIQ+ community and solving their problems.

CHRISMON EVANGELISCH MAGAZINE COVERS LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN ARMENIA. INTERVIEW WITH ACTIVISTS

August 8, 2020



On August 8, 2020, Chrismon Evangelisch Magazine covered the topic of the rights of LGBTQI people in Armenia by interviewing several Armenian LGBTQI activists thereby developing the discourse of the rights of LGBTQI people and their feelings in the patriarchal Armenian society. But before moving on to the main interviews, the magazine reflected the attitude of the majority of the Armenian society on LGBTQ issues. Armenia is one of the countries in the world where trans people are mostly discriminated and persecuted. Meantime Armenia is considered a part of Western Europe as a democratic country, where people are always proud to be the first Christians. However, the mentality of most people is so conservative that it denies the existence of LGBTQI people, arguing that “we need families where future soldiers will be born, because otherwise Azerbaijan will destroy us.” According to a survey conducted by the LGBTQI International Association of 49 European Countries, Armenia ranks as the 47th country in terms of persecution and discrimination against LGBTQI people. Only in Russia and Azerbaijan the situation is worse than in Armenia. Homosexual relations and passport name change are

no longer illegal in Armenia. Since 2015, trans people have been able to change their names without changing their registered passport sex. But the rejection of LGBTQI people by people of other gender is still radical; it is still unacceptable for the majority of the patriarchal militarized people of the Armenian society. In 2014 when Conchita Wurst won the Eurovision Song Contest, and Anush Arshakyan, a singer from Armenia from the music duet Inga-Anush Arshakyan and later a judge of Eurovision Song Contest, said: “I find that phenomenon disgusting, just like madness.” Anush later apologized for her statement. However, this language penetrates the human languo-mentality, creating fertile ground for stigma and discrimination against LGBTQI people. Such a mindset could lead to an increase of hate crimes in the number, as happened in the summer of 2018 in the village Shurnukh, when residents attacked a group of LGBTQI people. Statistically, almost every day transgender people are killed in the world. Activists have estimated that 700 transsexuals have been killed worldwide in the past two years. Human Rights Campaign reported that 26 trans people were killed in the United States last year.

Summarizing the general situation, the interview was continued with the activists telling their life stories. First, the interviewer spoke with Lilit Martirosyan, President of the “Right Side” human rights NGO. Lilit Martirosyan told the German magazine that she should be careful, many people hate her. “Almost every day, somewhere in the world, someone is killed simply because he or she is a transgender,” Lilit added. She was the first trans woman speaking in the Armenian parliament about the rights of LGBTQI people. After her speech in the National Assembly Priest Petrosyan publicly called for the execution of transgender people like her for their gender identity. The Armenian “PA” party member and Member of Parliament explained to the media that men should not be confused with women, as it is shameful. In her three-minute speech in the RA parliament, Lilit presented the fact-based discourse of discrimination stigma and persecution of LGBTQI people in Armenia. After her speech, a huge wave of hatred and death threats collapsed on Lilit. The head of the NA Naira Zohrabyan accused Lilit of “violating” and “disrespecting” the NA agenda. Immediately after that, another threatening messages appeared on Lilit’s Facebook page. The situation became worse when the address of her apartment was published on the Internet.

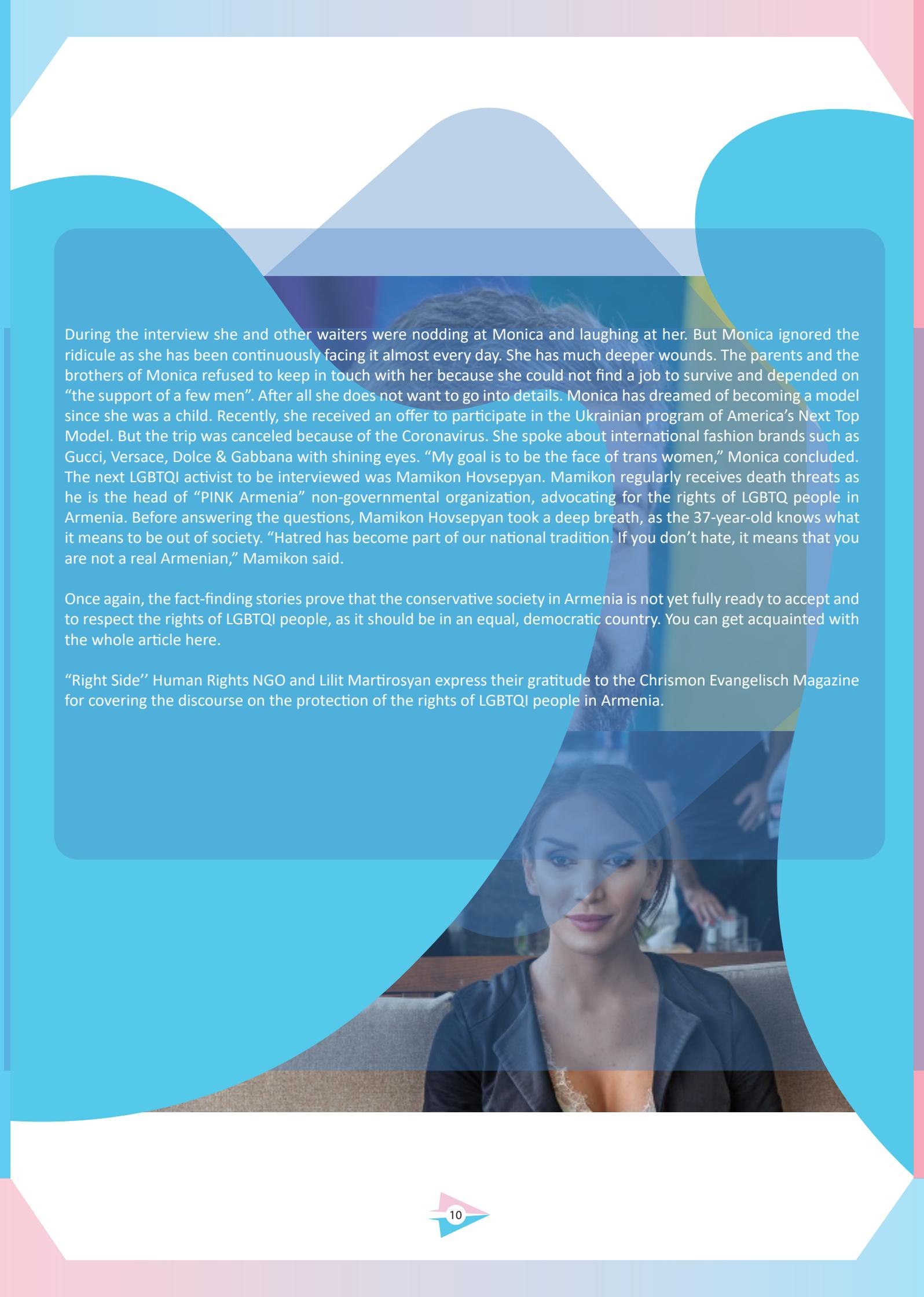


The angry crowd gathered in front of her house, shouting insulting things and threats. The situation was aggravated until the representatives of the European Union and the United Nations warned about the “increase of hate speech and violence” in Armenia. First, Lilit had to hide in Armenia, then spend a few weeks abroad.

Chrismon Evangelisch Magazine conducted the interview in the office of the “Right Side” human rights NGO which Lilit founded to protect the rights of transgender people. Lilit sat at her desk and told her life story. She grew up in a village which is just a few hours away from Yerevan. Lilit didn’t want to tell the name of the place to protect her family. Her father is a farmer, the mother is a housewife. “Everything was very traditional,” she says. At the age of ten or eleven, Lilit started secretly wearing her mother’s clothes, but the family persuades her that the desire is only in her head. Lilit answered. “No, I’m a woman, I feel it.” The situation got worse every day until Lilit run away from home at the age of 13. She headed to Yerevan, telling her parents that she had found a job. In fact, she had to do a sex work to survive. Lilit found an apartment where she lived with other transgender women who also felt that they were born in the wrong body. Life was difficult for them as nobody hired transsexuals, because otherwise the protest of the patriarchal society would be too extensive. The young trans woman had to work on the streets. Lilit was beaten and mistreated, even threatened with a knife. Fortunately, the roommates heard her scream and came to help. However, these years were a period of liberation for her, as Lilit said. She now lives as a successful activist working on the front lines for transgender rights. However, she noted that there are many problems with hormone therapy, as there are no necessary hormones approved by the doctors in Armenia forever. Then she returned to Yerevan, as she did not want to become a refugee, because this is also her country. Her friends live here, they continue to be discriminated, so she meets with her colleagues every day in their small office to support the transgender community. To the question of the interviewer what needs to be changed in Armenia, Lilit answered that there are no laws and regulations to protect them, there are no hormones for them, there are no doctors or clinics where they can have surgery. Lilit wants to fight for it to the end.

Lilit was discriminated by the Armenian doctors too as they refused to make her sex reassignment surgery. Lilit had to call a surgeon from Russia because it was difficult for an Armenian surgeon to break the taboo by making a sex reassignment surgery. Lilit's surgeries took place in secret, at night in 2015, shortly after Christmas Day. Lilit sacrificed all her savings for the operation. It was the third sex reassignment surgery in Armenia. Lilit did not want to reveal to the German magazine where the actions took place or who took care of her, as she had to defend herself. Since Lilit's parliamentary speech on April 5, 2019 she and her co-workers and family members have received threats such as "Burn her," "The death penalty for them." Lilit also mentioned that she wants to stay in Armenia. After her parliamentary speech, she had to hide and spend two weeks abroad. Lilit said that for a moment she thought of staying abroad forever. Then she returned to Yerevan, as she did not want to become a refugee, because this is also her country. Her friends live here, they continue to be discriminated, so she meets with her colleagues every day in their small office to support the transgender community. To the question of the interviewer what needs to be changed in Armenia, Lilit answered that there are no laws and regulations to protect them, there are no hormones for them, there are no doctors or clinics where they can have surgery. Lilit wants to fight for it to the end.

The magazine interviewed trans model Monica Sarkisyan. In June 2019, he was attacked by a crowd in the center of Yerevan. "It is one of them, burn her," a woman shouted as Monica was walking in the center of Yerevan. She has always had a shocker gun with her. A man ran to Monica, pulled out her dress, shouting: "Take off your clothes. Prove that you are a woman." The crowd attacked her. Monica pulled out a shocker gun, holding it in the air to push people back and to defend herself. She always had to carry it in her bag. Later, when the police arrived, only Monica was taken to the police station. The magazine interviewed Monica in a cafe near the opera house in Yerevan. The waitress was acting quite nervous at the sight of the trans woman.



During the interview she and other waiters were nodding at Monica and laughing at her. But Monica ignored the ridicule as she has been continuously facing it almost every day. She has much deeper wounds. The parents and the brothers of Monica refused to keep in touch with her because she could not find a job to survive and depended on “the support of a few men”. After all she does not want to go into details. Monica has dreamed of becoming a model since she was a child. Recently, she received an offer to participate in the Ukrainian program of America’s Next Top Model. But the trip was canceled because of the Coronavirus. She spoke about international fashion brands such as Gucci, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana with shining eyes. “My goal is to be the face of trans women,” Monica concluded. The next LGBTQI activist to be interviewed was Mamikon Hovsepyan. Mamikon regularly receives death threats as he is the head of “PINK Armenia” non-governmental organization, advocating for the rights of LGBTQ people in Armenia. Before answering the questions, Mamikon Hovsepyan took a deep breath, as the 37-year-old knows what it means to be out of society. “Hatred has become part of our national tradition. If you don’t hate, it means that you are not a real Armenian,” Mamikon said.

Once again, the fact-finding stories prove that the conservative society in Armenia is not yet fully ready to accept and to respect the rights of LGBTQI people, as it should be in an equal, democratic country. You can get acquainted with the whole article [here](#).

“Right Side” Human Rights NGO and Lilit Martirosyan express their gratitude to the Chrismon Evangelisch Magazine for covering the discourse on the protection of the rights of LGBTQI people in Armenia.

DONATION

Your donation to the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO will help us to provide food, shelter, relief supplies, emotional, psychological, and legal support, recovery planning, and other types of assistance to our beneficiaries during urgent and unanticipated cases.

By making a donation you stand with us, as we respond to the needs and requirements of the transgender and sex worker community living in Armenia.

The Right Side NGO team never turns away transgender people and sex workers who need assistance; we are committed to bringing help and hope to all those in need. We provide critical services to people who don't know where to turn after being victims of stigma and discrimination or who need help from our community-led organization after sacrificing so much on our behalf by being a transgender activist and transgender people's rights advocate in Armenia and abroad.

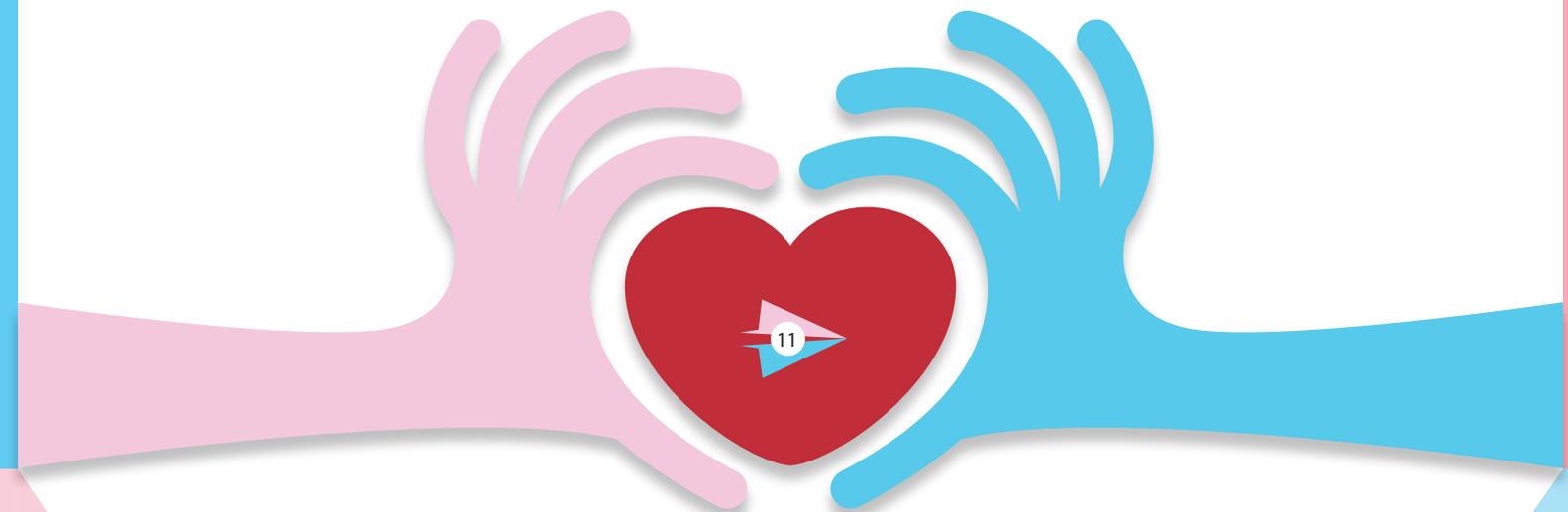
Our mission is to ensure the well-being, protection, and equality of the trans community and sex workers in Armenia by achieving social-cultural and legal changes. Your support makes it possible!

Make a donation to the following accounts:

Account holder -Right Side Defender NGO
IBAN – N/A
BIC/SWIFT INJSAM22
Bank name CJSC INECOBANK
Bank Address 17, Tumanyan, Yerevan

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2050022438271042 EUR
2050022438271020 USD
2050022438271043 GBP

Or contact us at rightsidengo@gmail.com NOW.



LILIT MARTIROSYAN'S CASE WAS APPLIED TO THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ECHR)

RA citizen Lilit Martirosyan, who is the President of the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO, delivered a speech during the parliamentary hearings on “National Human Rights Agenda. UN Universal Periodic Review” at the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on April 5, 2019. After her speech, many people began to publicly express hate speech against Lilit Martirosyan and threaten to kill her by noting that being a transgender she had no right to speak in the RA National Assembly.

Lilit Martirosyan submitted a report to the Kentron Investigator’s Office, Chief Investigator’s department of Yerevan, RA Police on April 6, 2019 on the case that after her speech on human rights in the RA National Assembly, the courier of the “SAS” supermarket chain illegally published her personal data, that is, the address of her place of residence on his Facebook page. In particular, the courier of “SAS” supermarket chain, who delivered food to Lilit Martirosyan by her order, seeing that the food was ordered by the latter, published her address on his Facebook page, as well as he expressed his willingness to provide Lilit Martirosyan’s phone number to all who wish.

At the same time, on the same day, Lilit Martirosyan reported that she had received threats of death and violence from a member of the “Eagle 30 Ararat Suicide Squad”, which was published via video. In particular, the person blowing threats in his video which is available on Youtube threatens to kill her at 2:52 seconds of the video and urges the authorities not to make him a murderer. A. Voskanyan, the investigator of the Kentron Department of the RA Police made a decision to reject the initiation of a criminal case based on the materials on April 16, 2019.

The mentioned decision has been appealed in all the courts of the Republic of Armenia, however, it has remained unchanged, and the Court of Cassation of the Republic of Armenia has left the cassation appeal without examination.

On September 9, 2020, Lilit Martirosyan filed a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights, requesting that the violation of Articles 3, 6, 8, 13 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms be recognized.

“RIGHT SIDE” HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO CONTINUES THE SERIES OF EDUCATIONAL- INFORMATIVE WEBINARS

In July-August 2020, the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO held nine webinars. There were 15-20 sex workers participating in each one. The webinars were quite informative by their format and were conducted by relevant professionals. The first webinar was conducted by Artur Margaryan, the lawyer of the “Right Side” NGO. Within the scope of that webinar, he raised sex workers’ awareness by introducing the participants the ways of working with the RA Police and their rights protection mechanisms in police stations.

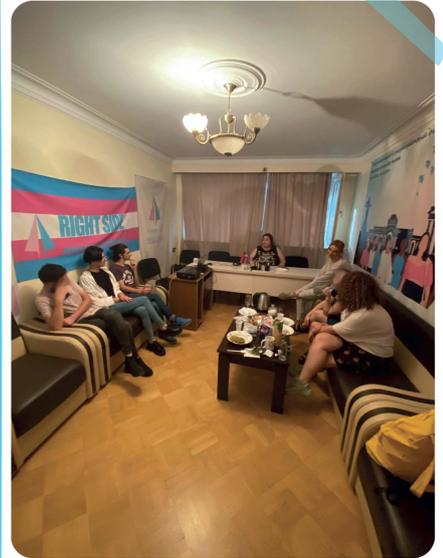
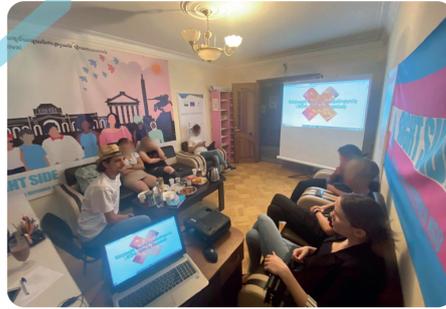
The main topics of the other webinars were the protection of the rights of sex workers, their right to health and meaningful engagement in advocacy processes. The webinars were conducted by Nora Pétrosyan and Lilit Martirosyan, who were discussing with the participants such issues as reduction of discrimination against sex workers, sex workers’ safety during and after COVID-19, prevention of violence against sex workers, the need to form mutual aid groups, identification and solution of their problems.

The webinars have been effective for the participants as during the Coronavirus, sex workers’ problems have become more critical and the ways for the solution of those problems have been decreased. Although life has already been transferred to the online platform due to COVID-19 outbreak, that is not an obstacle for the “Right Side” NGO to organize events for raising the awareness of sex workers, of course, by keeping all precaution rules of the public safety.

“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO would like to express its gratitude to the Sex Workers’ Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) for standing by our side during this difficult time, as well as to the experts for conducting the webinars and sharing vital and necessary information with the community. After all, “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO is thankful to all the participants for active participation, for their will to be educated, develop their competences and for their desire to become a community leader.



A NUMBER OF EVENTS TOOK PLACE IN SEPTEMBER



From 14 to 20 September 2020, “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO organized a number of events; two of them were held through Zoom online platform, the others were held at the community centre of the organization.

On September 15 there was organized a meeting-discussion on “HIV/AIDS and STIs” at the “Right Side” NGO’s community centre.

The meeting was meant to raise the awareness of Trans and LGBT+ sex workers about HIV/AIDS to fill in the educational gap among the community.

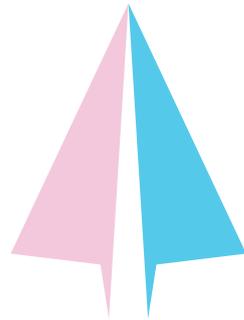
The meeting was held by Lilit Martirosyan who is the President of the NGO. During the event, participants discussed a number of issues related to HIV / AIDS and STIs with the president of the organization. Lilit Martirosyan particularly explained what STI is, what kind of STIs are there, how to prevent them and how to do medical checks. After all, Mrs Martirosyan answered to all the questions of the participants. In the second part of the event, an online meeting was held, during which we talked about how we could advocate for the right to health. The meeting became a reality through the Zoom online platform, which was

The meeting was held by Artak A., the Community Mobilizer of the organization. Artak presented what was advocacy and what kind of activities and resources were used for that. It was also discussed about health, access to medical services, government's obligations that had to be fulfilled to maintain public health. Artak A. summarized the meeting by answering all the questions.

Then, on September 16, another event: "Our Needs and the Discrimination Cases during COVID-19" was implemented at the community centre of the "Right Side" NGO. After the event, the lawyer of the NGO provided legal consultation to transgender sex worker community. During the event, all participants were informed about discrimination, its direct and indirect manifestations, the protection mechanisms, the need for anti-discrimination legislation, etc. Then, by highlighting the discrimination cases during the epidemic, the participants tried to approach the cases more critically and look for solutions for them. In the second part of the event, the participants actively discussed about Trans LGBTIQ+ sex workers needs during COVID-19. They spoke about their psychological, financial and social needs. In addition, they discussed about the importance of the organization's financial and social support projects, especially the active work of community centre, which provides non-formal education to and ensures socialization of Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers.

Moreover, on September 18 "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO realized another webinar through the Zoom online platform. The aim of the webinar was to raise the awareness about the right to health and prevention of Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among Trans LGBTIQ+ sex worker community. The training was held by Lilit Martirosyan, President of the organization, who presented what is hormone therapy, its international and local practices, she also presented the legal gaps and legal situation of that. After all, Lilit Martirosyan spoke about where and how to do medical checks in order to be informed about their STIs and HIV/AIDS status. Besides, she spoke about the services of the organization. Then Lilit Martirosyan answered all the questions of Trans LGBTIQ+ and sex worker participants.

You can follow the events and the activities of the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO in our Facebook account or in our website.



RIGHT SIDE

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFFENDER NGO



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