

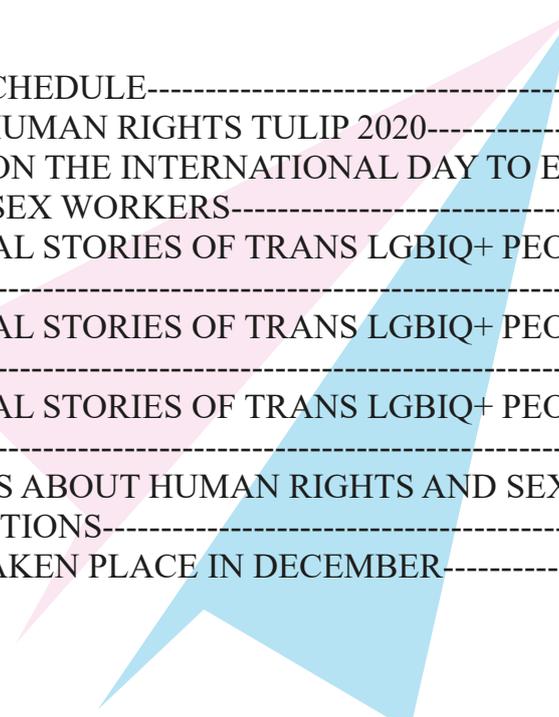
TRANS NEWSLETTER

December - 2020



No. 16





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MONTHLY EVENTS SCHEDULE

01.12.2020 - 31.12.2020

Event Name	Day	Time
"World AIDS Day" Exhibition of Transgender's and sex workers' photo stories.	01.12.2020	16:00
"The Perspectives of Trans Activism in Armenia" ZOOM online community meeting	04.12.2020	16:00
Movie watching and discussion ahead of Human Rights Day	08.12.2020	16:00
The publication of the announcement of RSNGO ahead of Human Rights Day	09.12.2020	16:00
"Preventing the deep-rooted Violence" ZOOM online community meeting	15.12.2020	13:00
The publication of the announcement of RSNGO ahead of 17th December	16.12.2020	16:00
"International Day to End the Violence Against Sex Workers" Exhibition of Trans LGBTQ+ and sex workers people's photo stories	17.12.2020	15:00
"Summerizing the Year with Trans LGBTQ+ and sex worker community members" community meeting	22.12.2020	16:00
Legal Consultation	24.12.2020	16:00

Film Screening-Discussion

On December 8, 2020, on the eve of the International Human Rights Day, a film screening-discussion on fundamental human rights and freedoms was held. The event was attended by more than 12 Trans LGBTQ+ people and sex workers, who actively discussed the topic after the film. During the meeting, Artak Adam, Community Mobilizer of the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO, introduced the essence of human rights and freedoms to the participants, explained what rights people had, then presented what the violation was and in which cases human rights could be restricted.

Human Rights Tulip 2020 Award

The Human Rights Tulip 2020 was awarded to Lilit Martirosyan, the Founder and President of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO on the 10th of December 2020. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Stef Blok presented the prize during an online ceremony organized by the Government of the Netherlands on Human Rights Day. Meanwhile, the Dutch embassy in Yerevan organized a ceremony for celebrating the event and congratulating Lilit for the award during which Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Nico Schermers handed over the award on behalf of Foreign Minister.

Public Campaigns

During its five years of operation, "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO has repeatedly raised the issue of stigma, discrimination, and hate crimes against sex workers, especially Transgender sex workers, given a legal support to sex workers, because they have been and are being subjected to all forms of violence, their rights are being violated every day. On the eve of the International Day to End the Violence against Sex Workers "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO organized public campaigns during December to protect the rights of sex workers and raise public awareness about them to break stereotypes about sex workers and eliminate negative opinion about them.



Series of Personal Stories

During December 2020, "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO continued to present the series of personal stories of Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers, through which various events of their life were collected and recorded. The purpose of the interviews was to present the lifestyle of the representatives of the mentioned group in the Republic of Armenia.

Legal Consultation

"Right Side" NGO informed the Trans LGBTIQ + community members and sex workers about human rights and fundamental freedoms by conducting 6 legal consultations. More than 42 Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers were involved in legal education and counseling

Needs Assessment

"Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO conducted a needs assessment among Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers, which was aimed at addressing the problems of Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers by meeting their needs. The needs assessment was carried out both through an online tool (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvGTz8MRChdAU4-EH63ZoZH_4AhNDzm-X58Eho5WBypDd0Kw/viewform), as well as through calls and face-to-face meetings.

Community Event on "Preventing Rooted Violence"

On December 15, it was held a community event on "Preventing Rooted Violence" through the Zoom online platform, which was attended by fourteen Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers. The Community Mobilizer of the organization presented what violence was, the types of violence, its manifestations, then spoke about the prevention of violence cases, introduced the local and international organizations that worked in that direction. The meeting was held with active discussions. Participants suggested to frequently address the topic of violence prevention and other related issues.

Community Meeting on "Work and Employment"

The last community meeting was held on December 24 on the topic "Work and Employment", which was attended by fifteen Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers. The meeting was chaired by A. Margaryan, the Lawyer of the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO with a format of questions and answers. Issues such as employment contracts, compulsory leave, overtime payment, employer-employee responsibilities and rights were raised during the meeting. At the end of the meeting A. Margaryan answered the questions of all the participants, providing them with additional information.

PRESS RELEASE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TULIP 2020

The Human Rights Tulip 2020 was awarded to Lilit Martirosyan, the Founder and President of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO on the 10th of December 2020. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Stef Blok presented the prize during an online ceremony organized by the Government of the Netherlands on Human Rights Day. Meanwhile, the Dutch embassy in Yerevan organized a ceremony for celebrating the event and congratulating Lilit for the award during which Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Nico Schermers handed over the award on behalf of Foreign Minister.

The Human Rights Tulip is an annual award of the Dutch Government to individuals or organizations that promote human rights worldwide in peaceful and innovative ways. The prize is awarded with a bronze statue and €100,000 in prize money, which the winner can use to further their human rights work.

The award ceremony was attended by various representative from the embassies, non-governmental organizations, media, academic circles and Armenian Transgender community members.

Welcoming the guests, Minister of Foreign Affairs Stef Blok has ensured the guests that the Netherlands will continue to support vulnerable people around the world in spite of their identity, origin, color, financial status or other features, because human rights are for everyone.

Touching upon the importance of promoting democratic values in Armenia, Mr. Nico Schermers had a broad discussion with the guests and encouraged the Transgender community to be actively involved in the civic life, to raise their problems by cooperating with the decision and policy makers and address their issues with the support of national and international organizations.



Lilit Martirosyan, in her turn, expressed her gratitude to the Government of the Netherlands, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, independent jury of Human Rights Tulip and friendly people for all their endeavors aimed at promoting dignity, Transgender people's rights and fundamental freedoms in Armenia by stating: "Now, I have a level of freedom that is unimaginable for millions of other Transgender people around the world – transgender people who live with contempt in their families, who put up humiliation by the society, who face constant contradiction, poverty, continuous segregation and discrimination, who never get a chance, whose voices are always silenced... Now, in this room we have the ability to stand up for our future, to show solidarity with others, to be a healing soul for the people in need and to help them realize their own dreams." She underlined that as a Transgender rights activist, she is committed and will remain engaged in the protection of Transgender human rights, with the mission of ensuring their well-being by speaking out for the voiceless and by promoting justice for all of them.

This award is a great honor for the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO team and for Transgender community in our country as this is another opportunity for raising their issues internationally and promoting their solution. We are certain that it paves a new path for Trans community in Armenia who will be able to speak freely about their rights and freedoms. Together we strive for not only Transgender people but also for the freedom of all vulnerable people facing discrimination cases and hatred every single day.



PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END THE VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS



Every year December 17 is commemorated as an International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers. The aim of the day is to speak up about hate speech, hate crime, societal stigma and discrimination against sex workers, prevent them and promote the level of awareness about sex work.

During its five years of operation, “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO has repeatedly raised the issue of stigma, discrimination, and hate crimes against sex workers, especially Transgender sex workers, given a legal support to sex workers, because they have been and are being subjected to all forms of violence, their rights are being violated every day.

Every year ahead of the International Day to End the Violence against Sex Workers “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO implements public campaigns for the protection of sex workers’ rights and promotion of the level of awareness about sex workers to break the entrenched stereotypes and eliminate the negative attitude towards them.

Taking into consideration the current situation and violence against sex workers in the Republic of Armenia, “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO urges the:

Civil Society

to include sex workers issues in their agenda and continue advocating for the elimination of stigma and discrimination against them.

Mass Media

to use the terms “sex worker” and “sex work” and to avoid the sermon of hate speech and discrimination against sex workers, to be objective and equitable, to maintain journalistic ethics and present the news without misrepresenting and distorting them.

Government

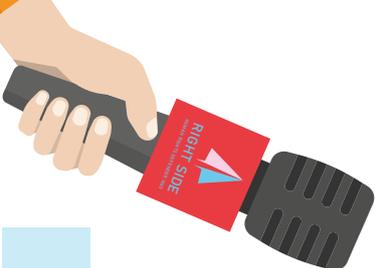
to take the appropriate legal steps to provide the exclusion of discrimination against sex workers and administrative fines, to ensure sex workers security and protection by the law.

“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO reminds that everyone is equal and has the right to live without violence, stigma and discrimination.

“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO reaffirms its adopted values and strategy for the sake of equality to continue to work hard for the full implementation of the rights of sex workers in the Republic of Armenia.

INTERNATIONAL
DAY
TO
END
VIOLENCE
AGAINST SEX
WORKERS





A SERIES OF PERSONAL STORIES OF TRANS LGBIQ+ PEOPLE AND SEX WORKERS

“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO continues to conduct a series of interviews with Trans LGBIQ+ people and sex workers to record and collect their life stories, aimed at presenting how the representatives of the above-mentioned group live in the Republic of Armenia.

This time the organization presents events that have taken place during the life of Trans LGBIQ+ people and sex workers, which are inspiring and can be the best example of solidarity, unity and support.

Our interlocutor is Transgender woman V. K., who has just entered the university. V. K. did not want to mention her name, university or profession in order to avoid discrimination.

V. K. said that after the entrance exams, when it was already clear who her classmates were, they met at the university to get acquainted with each other and the lecturers. However, our interlocutor was not able to take part in that meeting, she only managed to get acquainted with her classmates at the beginning of September.

“I remember that during my first visit I accidentally approached an employee and asked him to accompany me to my classroom, because the schedule had already been sent, and I could say what audience I needed. The employee accompanied me. The first hour was English. I went in, greeted everyone, walked to the random free bench and sat down next to a girl who got acquainted with me with pleasure. At that moment I thought that such a thing was almost impossible, when someone could communicate with me without a stereotypical attitude. Naturally, I was worried that I might be discriminated against on the very first day, and what was worse, I could face violence,”-said our interlocutor.

Then V.K. continued to mention that the two of them often started speaking English, because, as the girl introduced herself, she had a bisexual sexual orientation, and speaking Armenian could have made them more visible, so discrimination against them could have been inevitable. From that day on, they have become best university friends.

Summing up the story of her life, V. K. said, “Our day starts with lessons, we spend our breaks together, we often walk in the park after classes. We discuss lessons, the best moments of our lives, memories, different topics that can make us happier and closer. We understand each other very well, the best example of which is that we often stand by people who are discriminated against, bullied or abused in the university. Moreover, we have managed to have a number of conversations with some of the lecturers, to inform them about the life of transgender people, sexuality and other related topic, which can in some way contribute to the change of public mentality, raising public awareness about trans people.”



A SERIES OF PERSONAL STORIES OF TRANS LGBIQ+ PEOPLE AND SEX WORKERS



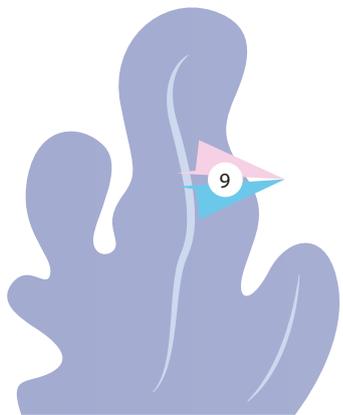
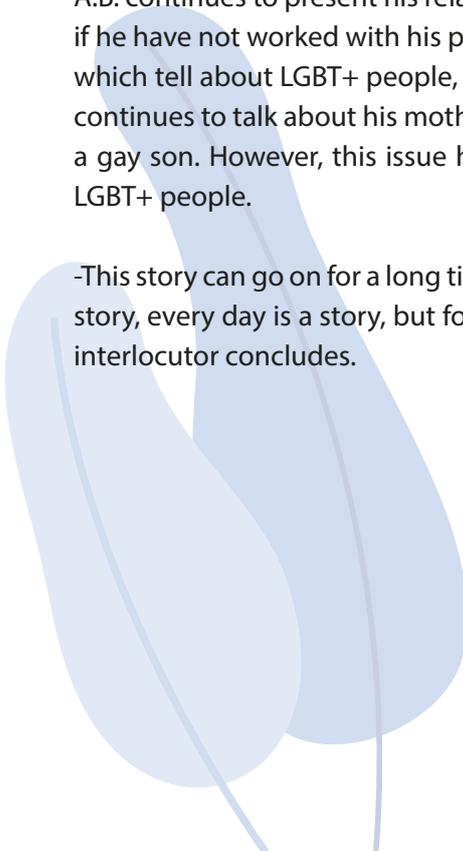
“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO continues to present the series of stories of Trans LGBIQ+ people and sex workers, through which various events of their life are collected and recorded. The purpose of the interviews is to present the lifestyle of the representatives of the mentioned group in the Republic of Armenia.

This story is about coming out. Our interlocutor is homosexual, agender A.B. Family solidarity was very important for A.B., he did his best not to have conflicts with the family members while learning about his identity.

– Many people around me know about my sexual orientation. I mean my family, my relatives and friends, my acquaintances, as well as my fellow villagers (I live in one of the villages near Yerevan). And everyone is still with me. Why it is important for me to mention this, because everyone treats me adequately and everything is normal in my relations with the mentioned people. Well, it is already clear that I have publicly revealed my identity. But there are some people that are extremely important to me. Many people knew that I was in Shurnukh, where the mob attacked us and started using violence against us. When I finally got home after Shurnukh incidents, everything was already clear to my family. I was lying down, my mother approached me and said: “Okay, I’ll try to give you time.” During those days I was in such a bad psychological situation that I could not even continue my work even in an organization dealing with LGBT+ people’s issues. However, the statement made by my mother hurt me, because I also realized that my mother understood everything and knew about my identity. When my mother was sitting outside, I approached her and, by sitting next to her, said that I was gay. My mother hugged me and said that she had already understood everything, but that did not stop her from being proud of me. Moreover, she gave me some advice that I should be proud of who I was, how many achievements I had, etc. – our interlocutor introduced and continued that after that day, he and his mother formed a perfect friendship and a warmer relationship. – From that moment I realized that I had the best mother in the world, which was perfect for me.

A.B. continues to present his relationship with his mother and says that everything can not have ended so well if he have not worked with his parents for years. He says that they have watched movies together many times, which tell about LGBT+ people, had discussions, listened to each other, freely expressed their opinion, etc. He continues to talk about his mother’s feelings when she has seemed to be the only mother in the world to have a gay son. However, this issue has also found its solution when she has got acquainted with the parents of LGBT+ people.

-This story can go on for a long time, because my relationship with my mother does not begin and end with this story, every day is a story, but for me it is one of the most important things that has happened in my life, -our interlocutor concludes.



A SERIES OF PERSONAL STORIES OF TRANS LGBIQ+ PEOPLE AND SEX WORKERS

A series of personal stories of Trans LGBIQ+ people and sex workers.

The "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO presents the third interview taken this month. Our interlocutor was L. A., who told the story of her coming out as a homosexual.

- I am quite close with my friend. She is my childhood friend. We played with each other a lot since we were little. Now, since we study in the same group at the university, we regularly do lessons together. One day we were sitting in the park talking about the lecturers. Then I said that I had a very important thing to tell her. We agreed to go to a quiet place, because what I had to tell her required a safe space.

L. continued to tell how they went to one of the LGBT community-based organizations later, where they had to talk.

- I deliberately offered my friend to go to an office, where there was a community center and we could talk calmly. But most importantly, I wanted to understand how my friend would react when she walked into the office and saw the LGBT+ flag. Fortunately, the response was quite positive. I stood by the flag and said I was a lesbian. My friend looked at me without any reaction and said that she did not see any problem. I expected a completely different response, at least surprise or laughter, but everything turned out better than I could have imagined. Then we had tea, during which my friend said that she had long assumed that I was lesbian, but she had not asked questions because it was my personal life.

L. mentioned that after coming out in front of her friend, their relationship became stronger. According to our interlocutor, self-disclosure seemed to be a method by which they could get closer, meet more often, walk together, support each other.

L. ended the story by missing the days when they went crazy together and by mentioning that honesty always helped to achieve peace.



RANGE OF TRAININGS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO, giving importance the increase of the level of education and awareness about health, STIs and human rights among Trans LGBTQ+ and sex workers community members, has conducted 6 one-day trainings on the rights of sex workers and HIV / AIDS prevention, during September and October of this year. The trainings were conducted by the president of the Organization Lilit Martirosyan and the lawyer of the Organization Arthur Margaryan.

During the training on “HIV / AIDS and Global Fund” held on September 9 and October 17, L. Martirosyan presented the participants in detail about HIV and AIDS, on the ways of conducting research on HIV status and ways of preventing it. During the trainings L. Martirosyan referred to the manifestations of stigma and discrimination against HIV-affected sex workers, urged to refrain from discriminatory attitude against sex workers and HIV-affected people, instead, by being aware fight stigma against sex workers. During the trainings, Lilit Martirosyan spoke about the activities of the Global Fund too, presented the HIV prevention programs implemented with the support of the fund.

The trainings were attended by Trans LGBTQ+ and sex worker people who addressed their questions to L. Martirosyan. All the questions of the participants were answered comprehensively and the trainings were held with informative and substantive discussions.

HUMAN

RIGHTS



“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO conducted four trainings for transgender people and sex workers during September to October: “Rights of Sex Workers”, “Rights Violation Cases of Sex Workers”, “Mechanisms for Protection of the Rights of Sex Workers” and “Right to health”. The Organization’s lawyer Arthur Margaryan who presented in detail the human rights, rights violation cases, their protection mechanisms, legal gaps in the protection of the rights of sex workers, etc. Speaking about the violations of the rights of sex workers, the lawyer presented the cases taken place so far and documented by “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO, as well as he presented what legal services the Organization had. Referring to the right to health, the trainer presented the allegations of violence, discrimination, stigma, bullying against Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers in medical institutions, presented several mechanisms for ensuring the right to health, etc.

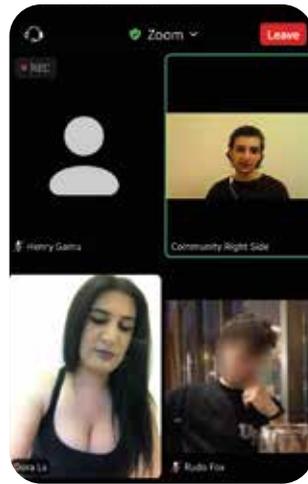
“Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO involved more than 60 Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers during the trainings who actively participated and contributed to the effective implementation of the trainings.

The Organization continues to carry out educational and informational activities that raise the awareness of Trans LGBTIQ+ people and sex workers on HIV / AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, human rights and other related issues.

During this year, “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO has been able to involve hundreds of Trans LGBTIQ+ and sex worker community members in its activities who have benefited from the educational, informational, legal and social services provided by the Organization, because the education, welfare and well-being of transgender people are important for the Organization.



SERIES OF EVENTS TAKEN PLACE IN DECEMBER



"Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO carried out a series of events during December 2020 which took place in the Trans LGBIQ+ safe space of the organization. The events were organized to raise the education and awareness level of Trans LGBIQ+ people and sex workers, promote their welfare, well-being, as well as improve and foster inter-community relations.

During December, the organization conducted a needs assessment, which is still ongoing this month. The purpose of the needs assessment is to improve the work of the organization making it more targeted by taking effective steps to meet the needs of the community, to develop their educational level. On December 4, the organization held a focus group meeting for needs assessment, which was attended by eight Trans LGBTQ + people and sex workers. The meeting lasted one hour during which the participants presented their opinions, needs and problems.

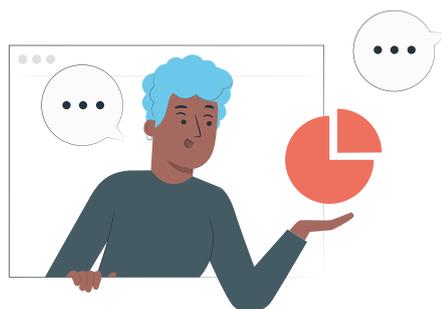
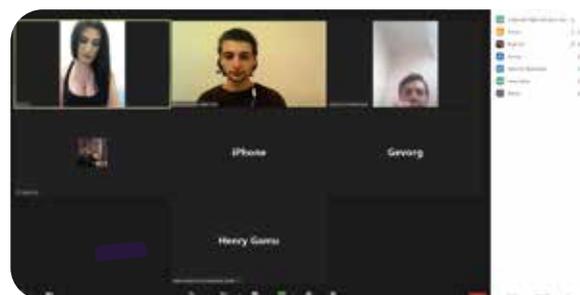
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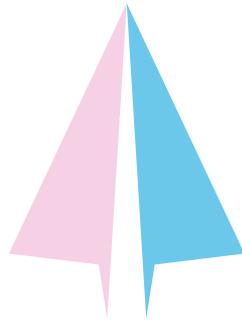
On December 15, it was held a community event on "Preventing Rooted Violence" through the Zoom online platform, which was attended by fourteen Trans LGBTQ+ people and sex workers. The Community Mobilizer of the organization presented what violence was, the types of violence, its manifestations, then spoke about the prevention of violence cases, introduced the local and international organizations that worked in that direction. The meeting was held with active discussions. Participants suggested to frequently address the topic of violence prevention and other related issues.

The last community meeting was held on December 24 on the topic "Work and Employment", which was attended by fifteen Trans LGBTQ+ people and sex workers. The meeting was chaired by A. Margaryan, the Lawyer of the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO with a format of questions and answers. Issues such as employment contracts, compulsory leave, overtime payment, employer-employee responsibilities and rights were raised during the meeting. At the end of the meeting A. Margaryan answered the questions of all the participants, providing them with additional information.

As a result of the activities carried out in 2020, the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO promoted the level of awareness of Trans LGBTQ+ people and sex workers on the protection of human rights, community health, safety, and trans activism, promote their welfare by providing legal, social-psychological consultations and humanitarian support.

It should be reminded that the Trans safe space of the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO is open from Monday to Friday, from 14:00 to 17:00.





RIGHT SIDE

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO



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