

TRANS NEWSLETTER

April - May 2021

MY RIGHTS TO LIVE

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Lilit Martirosyan

The Founder and President of a Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, has been elected Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) Management Committee Member.

LILIT MARTIROSYAN - SWAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dear Colleagues, TRANS LGBTIQ and SEX WORKER community,

We are happy to share this wonderful news with you.

Lilit Martirosyan, the Founder and President of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, has been elected Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) Management Committee Member.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO being the leading transgender advocacy organization in the region in Armenia, promotes the involvement of sex workers in all spheres of life, preventing stigma and discrimination against sex workers, ensuring a safe and prosperous environment for them.

Lilit Martirosyan has repeatedly raised the issue of continuing inhuman treatment, stigma and discrimination against sex workers at local and international levels. This platform is another opportunity to fight for the full implementation of the rights of sex workers.

Many problems for sex workers are not solved in Armenia yet, in particular:

- Sex work is illegal.
- Sex workers are fined.
- Sex workers are subjected to violence.
- Sex workers are stigmatized and discriminated against.
- Sex workers are persecuted and ridiculed.
- Sex workers' pictures and videos are published by the police many times, which endangers their safety.
- Sex workers are ignored and neglected by the society.

Lilit Martirosyan, being SWAN Management Committee Member, will do her best to help the whole SWAN team build a safe, prosperous life for sex workers not only in Armenia but around the world.

#SexWorkIsWork

#MyBodyIsMyRight

#IAmTheOwnerOfMyBody

A SERIES OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS ON “SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ACTIVISM” TOOK PLACE

B | S | T The Black Sea Trust
for Regional Cooperation
A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

RIGHT SIDE
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO



HPLGBT



In February-March, 2021, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO held ten community meetings with Transgender LGBTIQ activists, their family members and allies at the organization’s community center.

The first meeting took place on February 2 with ten Trans LGBTIQ activists on the “Situation of Trans People in Armenia.” During the training, the participants shared their concerns, such as security issues in Armenia, stigma, discrimination against trans people, hate speech on the online platform, the difficulties they had encountered during COVID-19, and a number of other issues faced by Trans people in Armenia. Representatives of the transgender community did a needs mapping, then discussed what to do in the future to improve the situation of Trans people in Armenia. Trainer L. Martirosyan, by documenting the problems and needs of all the participants, assured that in the near future all the problems would be solved through joint efforts by achieving respect for human rights and creating a safe environment for the community in the Republic of Armenia. The participants, by highlighting the importance of similar educational community meetings, suggested a number of topics for the future meetings.

Continuing the series of trainings, the second meeting took place on February 19 in the safe space of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO by uniting twenty Trans LGBTIQ activists and their parents from Yerevan and different regions. The aim of the training was to create an environment where trans people could discuss family problems with their parents that had not been resolved during those years. During the training, stigma and discrimination by family members, particularly by fathers, were discussed. The end of the course was very emotional, as there were people who for the first time raised issues that had hindered the formation of an atmosphere of solidarity in their family. This important meeting ended with the embrace of parents and children.

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The next training was held on February 22, the topic of which was “Our Rights in Police Departments and Courts.” The meeting was attended by ten Trans LGBTIQ activists from Yerevan and different regions of Armenia, who had participated in previous meetings. The training was conducted by the Organization’s Lawyer A. Margaryan, who gave the participants full information on how to protect rights in police stations, how to demand a lawyer, in which cases go to the police, he answered a number of questions that were interesting to the participants, and then the participants gained knowledge about the RA judiciary system, formed an idea of the RA courts. A. Margaryan also spoke about the role of the European Court, the European Convention on Human Rights, and presented a number of other details related to rights necessary for all the participants in their future activism. After completing the course, A. Margaryan added that they could apply to him with any legal issues, get advice and representation, then added that everyone should stand up for their rights, live in a dignified life free from stigma and discrimination, ridicule and violence.

The fourth meeting with Trans LGBTIQ activists took place on March 1, the topic of which was “Stigma, Discrimination, Hate Speech in the Media and its Impact on the Community.” The aim of the training was to reduce stigma of discrimination against Trans LGBTIQ people, to document hate speech cases on social media and find solutions to prevent them. All the activists expressed concerns about the post-war situation in the country, which had exacerbated the level of discrimination both in real life and on the online platform. During the training, activists raised a number of issues related to hate speech, lack of laws that affected their safety and quality of life, as well as they highlighted the cases that had been regularly terminated by the police as hate speech had not been considered a crime.

The next meeting was organized on March 4 with the participation of twenty Trans LGBTIQ people and sex workers. The topic of the seminar was “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Activism of Transgender and Sex Worker Communities.” The seminar was conducted by H. Galstyan, Trans LGBTIQ Community Mobilizer of the Organization. The participants shared their experience faced during the difficult days of the pandemic, how they were able to live, fight for their rights during those days while having no job, no money, no help from family members. All the participants did needs assessment, discussed the ways to solve them, raised their concerns and received exhaustive answers. The representatives of the communities thanked the RS HRD NGO team and the funding organization for the social assistance provided during the pandemic, which was very important and urgent for them.

At the initiative of activists, the next meeting was organized on March 9 in the safe space of the NGO. Fifteen Trans LGBTIQ activists and allies took part in the training. That time the activists chose how to make information posters, magazines, leaflets that would increase the visibility of LGBTIQ people in the media and society. The training was conducted by R. Yeghiazaryan, Graphic Designer of the organization, who shared his past experience, gave the participants detailed knowledge about graphic programs, which would help the activists in the process of conducting public awareness campaigns on social media. The activists thanked the trainer for providing new knowledge and skills, then added that the gained knowledge would be used to break stereotypes about LGBTIQ people on social media. R. Yeghiazaryan assigned the participants to present a poster on human rights protection during the next meeting and spread it on social media.

Continuing the series of meetings on March 13, the activists presented R. Yeghiazaryan the media posters on human rights promised during the previous course. R. Yeghiazaryan thanked all the activists for their hard work, then asked them to be involved in the work of the NGO in the future to raise awareness about the organization at local and international levels. The topic of the meeting was “Me as an LGBTIQ Activist”. Since the topic was very familiar to all the activists, they suggested developing a security guide that would help them be more protected in the future, as activists continued to be stigmatized, discriminated against, and faced a number of security issues as front-line defenders. The participants developed safety guidelines not only for themselves but also for other members of the community to ensure and protect their physical and mental safety. The participants offered to organize a series of seminars for their peers to share their knowledge. LGBTIQ activists also developed a calendar of public events for LGBTIQ people in order to organize awareness-raising events and activities in the future. At the end of the meeting, the participants thanked one another for the effective group work and decided the day of the next meeting.

During the March 24 meeting on “How to Involve Public Figures in LGBTIQ Activism?” the participants, with the help of the trainer, identified the problems of LGBTIQ people, developed activities aimed at solving them, a significant part of which was the involvement of public figures in those processes. The participants acquired skills that would enable them to promote the participation of target groups in leadership and equality establishment projects.

The next penultimate meeting was dedicated to self-care, which was attended by twelve Trans LGBTIQ activists, who were involved in the training from Yerevan and different regions of Armenia. The training was conducted by L. Martirosyan, the Founder and President of the NGO, who asked the activists to pay a special attention to self-care throughout their activism, as activists were often exposed to stress, trauma, mental and physical fatigue, and later had many health problems, she stressed the need for rest so that they did not feel burnout in the future. The participants raised all the issues related to self-care, suggested that yoga and meditation meetings be organized frequently, and that all those who need psychological counseling be given the opportunity to visit a psychologist on a regular basis.

The last meeting took place on March 28 in the community’s safe with the participation of ten Trans LGBTIQ activists. The topic of the meeting was “The Prospects of Organizing a Trans LGBTIQ Pride in Armenia.” Through active discussions the activists tried to assess the risks of organizing a pride taking into account the current situation in Armenia after the war and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The activists, studying the history of prides in a number of European countries, made comparisons with the activism situation and LGBTIQ activities in the EaP countries. Some of the activists recalled the parade in Georgia, which was organized for the first time in Georgia by our partner Tbilisi Pride NGO.

On March 30, after completing the series of trainings, all the participants gathered to summarize the knowledge gained during the two months, to discuss the problems and obstacles faced by Trans LGBTIQ people in Armenia during their activism, and then by comparing the activism situation with the one in Georgia and Ukraine they made suggestions and comments.

It should be mentioned that the series of trainings has been implemented within the framework of the project “Activism Building among LGBTI People in the EaP Countries” which is funded by the German Marshall Fund of the United States and carried out by the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO from Armenia, Tbilisi Pride NGO from Georgia and HPLGBT NGO from Ukraine. The goal of the project is to increase the knowledge of LGBTIQ people on human rights and fundamental freedoms, develop their skills on advocacy and leadership to reduce hate speech, hate crimes and discrimination against them, ensure community’s security and well-being through advocacy and activism and promote the strengthening of the LGBTIQ movement for the establishment of democratic values in the region.

#Regional_LGBT_Activism, #BST_RS_HPLGBT_TbilisiPride_Cooperation

THE VIOLATION OF RIGHTS ON THE BASIS OF DISCRIMINATION WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE COURT

In June-August 2018, Transgender N.A. and M.S. as well as M.E. attended the “Mali” sports club operated by PE Liana Safaryan and located at 21 Koryun Street, Yerevan.

In August 2018, Liana Safaryan announced that they could no longer visit her sports club to train, as they were transgender people and were not allowed to enter the club.

In September-October 2018, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO sent letters to Liana Safaryan asking her to inform us about the reasons for banning transgender people from training at the sports club; however, for various reasons she refused to give legal grounds for the ban.

After that, the lawyer of the “Right Side” HRD NGO applied to the court, asking to recognize the violation of the rights of transgender people on the basis of discrimination.

After a trial of about two and a half years, the court rendered a fair judicial act, recognizing the violation of the rights of N.A., M.S. and M.E. on the basis of discrimination on 18th of March 2021.

In the judgment, the court particularly stated that: “It was substantiated by the specific facts of the case that the Plaintiffs were discriminated against, as they were treated in a different manner from other clients within the same legal status, in particular, they were deprived of the right to visit the club and the rights arising from the service transaction with the Respondent. Consequently, the Court came to the conclusion that the case had proved the fact that the Respondent violated the Plaintiffs’ rights solely on the grounds of sexual orientation and (or) gender identity, and prohibited the Plaintiffs from using the services of the “Mali” sports club solely on the basis of discrimination.”



As we presented earlier, in February 2021, three transgender women purchased fourteen-day holiday packages to Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Arriving at Sharm el-Sheikh airport on February 19, after waiting for six hours at the security checkpoint, they were informed that none of them could visit the country, as it was stated in their passports that they were men, they could enter the country only after changing their gender markers in the passport.

Immediately, the “Right Side” HRD NGO applied to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in the Arab Republic of Egypt for clarifications on the incident.

In April 2021, the “Right Side” NGO received an official letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia regarding the following: the reason for forbidding D. Gh., H. D. and E. A. from visiting Egypt was the discrepancy between the gender of the mentioned individuals in their passports and their appearance.

There are many such cases when the rights of transgender people are violated both in the Republic of Armenia and outside the borders of the country, but they have not been addressed for years.

The “Right Side” HRD NGO has repeatedly raised this issue in the RA Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and other state institutions for solutions, but so far it has not received any positive response or the submitted letters have remained unanswered.

The “Right Side” HRD NGO calls for immediate legislative reforms to eliminate the existing problem that transgender people have been facing for years, receiving many psychological traumas that affect their quality of life.

The conclusion of the Civil Acts Registration Office on making corrections, additions or changes in the record of the Civil Status Acts Registration of the Republic of Armenia is drawn up in the following cases, when, in accordance with the RA legislation, the medical institution has issued a formal document on the gender reassignment. That is, if a person wants to make a change in the record of the Civil Status Act (gender marker change), they must:

- Carry out a gender reassignment surgery.
- Submit a document on gender reassignment issued by a medical institution in accordance with the RA legislation.

In its judgment in the case of AP, Garçon and Nicot v. France (06.04.2017), the European Court of Human Rights referred to the above-mentioned issues, in particular, noting that: legal gender recognition on sterilising surgery or treatment, which the persons concerned do not necessarily wish to undergo means a complete denial of the exercise of the right to respect for one's private life. The Court found that a change in a person's appearance, through gender reassignment surgery, sterilization or other medical interventions, leads to irreversible consequences and violates the person's physical immunity. The Court held that the respondent State had failed to fulfill its positive obligation to ensure respect for the right to privacy. The Court finds that there has been a violation of Article 8 in this regard. In addition, compulsory sterilization has been criticized by the European Court of Human Rights in the cases of Y.Y. v. Turkey and Soares de Melo v. Portugal.

That is, it should be noted that the state cannot force a person to undergo gender reassignment surgery, as it completely violates the state's obligation to respect the inviolability of everyone's private life and freedom. Gender identity or sexual orientation is a part of a person's private life; a person should not make a choice between their physical and mental immunity and sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, demanding proof of gender identity is degrading, violating a person's dignity.

According to Article 26 of the RA Constitution, no one can be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Thus, the study of the above-mentioned factual-legal circumstances concludes that the existing regulations in the Republic of Armenia force a person to undergo gender reassignment surgery (sterilization) to make changes or corrections in the Acts of Civil Status Registration, which has already been substantiated and proved is a rough interference with a person's private life, a violation of the European Convention as well as national law. Therefore, it should be noted that the state forces a person to undergo irreversible surgery to make a correction in the Act of Civil Status Registration, which is inadmissible and contradicts the international obligations assumed by the Republic of Armenia.

At the same time, it should be noted that in Armenia there are no legal regulations, according to which the norms for providing a certificate of gender reassignment by a medical institution would be defined, the Ministry of Health still does not specify what is considered a gender reassignment.

As a result of a study conducted by the human "Right Side" HRD NGO, there are a number of CIS countries where only a document by a psychologist or a group of psychiatrists is enough for a person to change their gender in the passport without mandatory medical intervention.

The "Right Side" HRD NGO is taking steps towards the radical solution to the problem. You can get information about the further process on this issue from our official website.

The "Right Side" HRD NGO urges Transgender people to cancel their planned visits to the Arab Republic of Egypt to avoid further problems.



Congratulations to Monica Sarkisyan on her selection as Miss Trans Global Armenia 2021. She will represent Armenia in Miss Trans Global 2021.

Monica is model and makeup artist. She hopes to use MFG 2021 to draw global attention to the plight of LGBTQ people who are heavily discriminated against in her country.

#MissTransGlobalArmenia

#MissTransGlobal

#MissTransGlobal2021

#TransIsBeautiful

#transgender

#TranswomenAreWomen

#TransPageant

#InternationalTransPageant

#Transbeautyqueen

#girlslikeus #MissTrans

#transgender

#BeautyPageant



MAY 17TH IS MARKED AS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND BIPHOBIA (IDAHOBIT).



SUSCRIBE 

This video is about the positive changes that LGBTQI people have achieved over these years.

The aim of this video is to reduce public hatred towards LGBTQI people by showing that LGBTQI people are full members of our society, they also have the right to live without discrimination, free and happy exempt from any form of hatred.

After all, "our rights are the SAME."

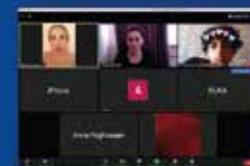
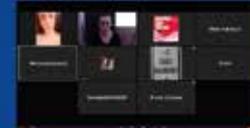
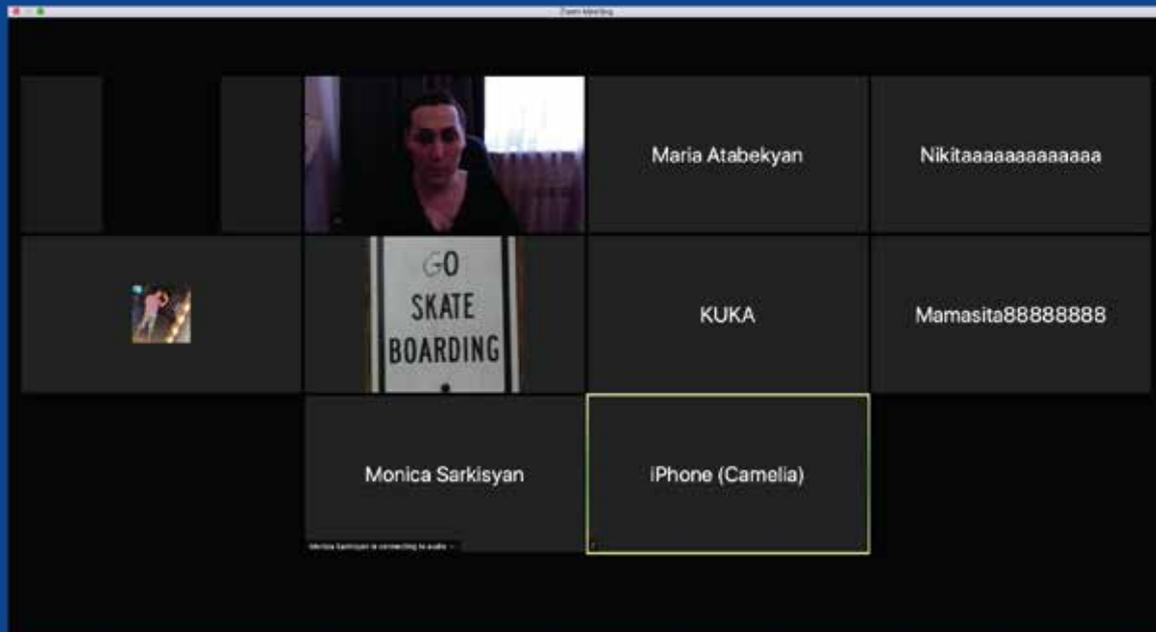
#IDAHOBIT2021 #TransgenderArmenia #LGBTIQrights

-  Love is love
 
-  We love it
 
-  Strong!!!!
 



“HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOUCH WITH TOMORROW”

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS INITIATED A NUMBER OF INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES



Twenty young transgender activists from Yerevan and different regions of Armenia, who had participated in the “Human Rights in Touch with Tomorrow” training-course, held a series of online meetings to discuss human rights and fundamental freedoms, the prospects of activism in Armenia, hate speech and violence against activists, stigma and discrimination on social media, advocacy, leadership, transgender people’ mental health and physical safety, social media campaigning skills, etc.

The first online meeting took place on April 5, which was initiated and carried out by transgender activist Kuka Kasyan, who had been fighting hate speech and violence for years and raising the visibility of transgender people on social media. K. Kasyan thanked all the participants for attending the organized online meeting and jointly reducing calls for discrimination, hate speech and violence against transgender people in Armenia. During the meeting K. Kasyan also presented the growing threats against trans people on social media, as a result of which the mental and psychological health of transgender people was being impaired. The participants discussed how in the future they could collect all the cases of hate speech and apply to the relevant bodies to ensure solutions to that problem.

Continuing the series of online events, the next meeting took place on April 17, again with the participation of trans activists. The meeting was conducted by M. Atabekyan and E. Karapetyan, who spoke about the mental, physical health and safety of transgender people. Being a transgender activist studying at the medical university, M. expressed a desire to help those who need first aid. The participants thanked the “Right Side” HRD NGO for providing psychological support to trans LGBTIQ people by highlighting the importance of that to avoid a number of mental problems in the future.

The next online meeting was dedicated to raising the level of awareness of transgender people about their rights. The training was conducted by transgender activist G. and NGO's lawyer Arthur Margaryan. A. Margaryan and G. presented how to protect their rights in the police, courts and a number of other institutions. The participants received comprehensive answers through questions and answers, as well as strengthened their knowledge, which would further contribute to their activism.

The meeting-discussion organized on April 21 was dedicated to the topic of leadership. The meeting was conducted by transgender activists A. and G., who had gained in-depth knowledge on the topic. The participants discussed the best models of European leadership, management skills and methods. At the end of the meeting, the participants enthusiastically mentioned that they would very much like to apply these models in Armenia as well.

The next meeting took place on May 3, chaired by activist H. Galstyan. The topic of the meeting was advocacy and campaign organization skills. The participants discussed how to involve community initiatives, professionals and various other groups in advocacy processes so that activism was further strengthened and developed in Armenia. A comprehensive discussion was held on the methods of organizing campaigns, a map of LGBTQI holidays and remembrance days was drawn up in order to organize public campaigns in the future.

During the penultimate online meeting, transgender activists discussed how learning foreign languages would enable them to apply for international exchange programs and volunteer work opportunities aimed at strengthening transgender and LGBIQ people by giving them new knowledge and knowledge-sharing skills. According to the participants, the level of hatred in Armenia is so high that they are not able to get enough knowledge in schools, and they are not able to be admitted universities because they are discriminated against by students or professors. They expressed a desire for the NGO to organize foreign language courses for transgender people, which would help them to be more educated, informed and strong.

The last meeting took place on May 24, with the participation of transgender activists who had attended the training course and conducted the series of webinars, as well as participated in public events organized by the NGO, filmed in social advertisements, prepared leaflets, had various meetings with transgender people, raising their level of information about this project and involving new transgender activists, who would further support such campaigns, increase the visibility of transgender people and strengthen the Trans movement in Armenia. The participants summarized all the webinars, planned the further steps, which would be aimed at the development and strengthening of activism, building a democratic and secure Armenia.

The second meeting was organized by transgender activists Vivien and Nikita. The topic of the meeting was the security and self-defense of transgender people. The participants discussed how transgender people were regularly discriminated, humiliated and ridiculed by the society. According to the participants, there were during the nighttime when transgender people had been attacked causing physical and mental injuries, and that problem had not been solved for years. Transgender activists discussed how to protect themselves and increase the level of awareness on security among transgender people. They also highlighted the importance of such meetings, as the discussions would further enhance the level of information and strengthen the steps taken for the safety of transgender people.

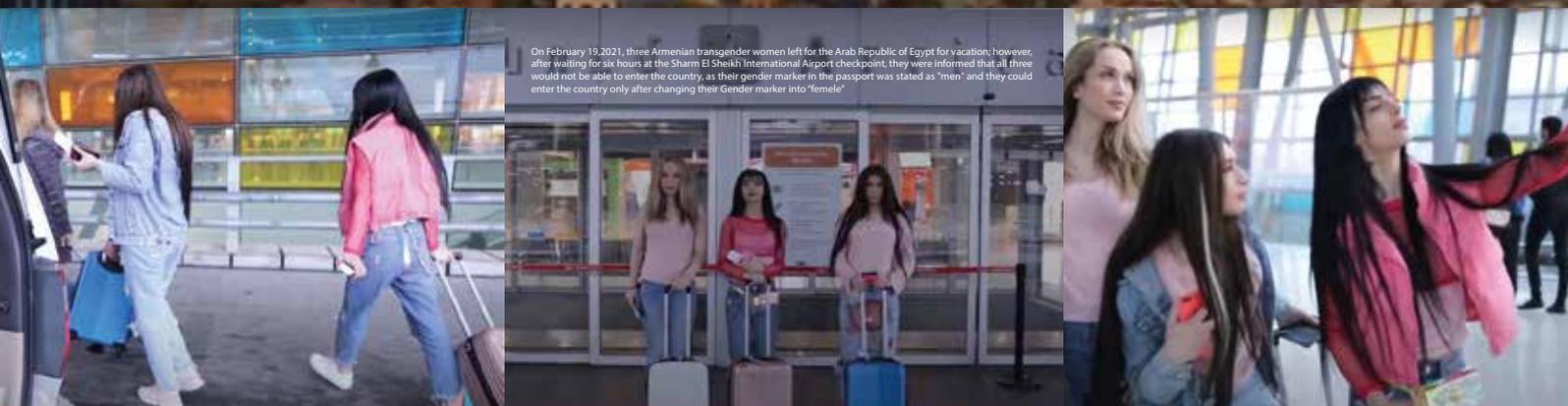
The next online meeting took place on April 12. It was held by transgender activists M. Sarkisyan and L. Martirosyan. During the meeting, M. and L. spoke about the situation of trans activism in Armenia, involving more transgender people in activism. The participants raised a number of security issues that prevent trans people from speaking up about their problems often in public. At the end of the meeting, the activists stressed the need to be fearless and fight for equality, security, well-being in order to end the stigma and discrimination against transgender people.

The activists thanked the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, as well as the European Union and the Council of Europe for the opportunity to involve transgender activists in the program, which helped them to be informed about human rights, advocacy, leadership, security, hate speech and other themes.

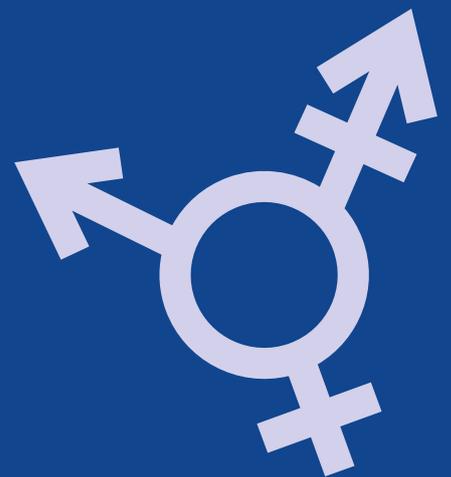
The series of meetings has been carried out within the framework of the “Strengthening access to justice through non-judicial redress for victims of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes in the Eastern Partnership” project which is funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe.

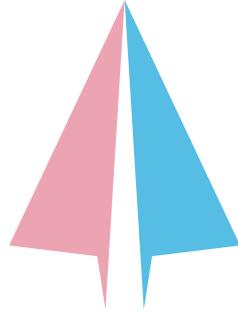
The views expressed during the meeting can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union or the Council of Europe.

MY RIGHTS TO LIVE



This video tells the story of three Armenian transgender women who went on vacation to the Arab Republic of Egypt but were discriminated at the checkpoint of Sharm El Sheikh International Airport because of the gender marker in their passports. The purpose of this video is to raise the issues of transgender people living in Armenia. This video is based on real facts.





RIGHT SIDE

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO



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