



# TRANS NEWSLETTER

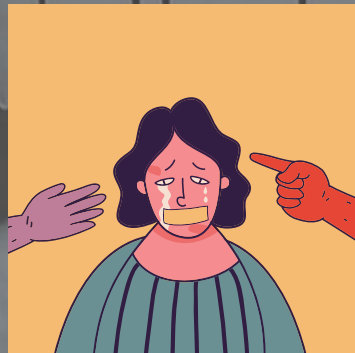
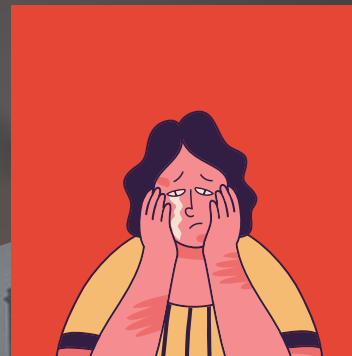
November December 2022

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## BECOUS OF THE SEXAUAL ORIENTATION THER WEAR TORTURED DURING THEIR SERVICE



In 2022, H.A. appealed to the Right Side HRD NGO and reported that he had made a statement about the crime in the Garrison Prosecutor's Office No. 1 of the RA Military Prosecutor's Office in 2021, regarding which a criminal case had been initiated and 4 people were charged under Article 309.1 of the RA Criminal Code, Part 1, 2, Clause 4 (torture). H.A. by applying to the Right Side HRD NGO asked to take over the protection of their interests as a victim.

H.A. informed the Organization that in 2020, when he had been in the Armed Forces x military unit in the Republic of Artsakh, he had been regularly beaten by the officers because of their sexual orientation. After reporting the crime, a criminal case was initiated and they were recognized as a victim.

Currently, the criminal case has been transferred from the Republic of Artsakh to the Department of Investigation of Crimes on Torture and Abusing or Exceeding Authorities by Officials through Using Violence of the General Department of Investigation of Particularly Important Cases of the RA Investigative Committee.

In this case, since October 5, the lawyer of the Right Side HRD NGO has been involved as the authorized representative of victim H.A.

@osceorg  
@ilgaeurope

## “OUR VISION FOR INCLUSION”

A photo exhibition under the title of “Our Vision for Inclusion” comprised of 20 photo-posters of LGBTIQ people, covering social rights (right to healthcare, housing, food, education, social security, work) has been exhibited in different art centers, corporate offices, anti-cafes, private clubs and hotels, public places, etc. in Armenian regions.



In Armenia Trans people face problems in daily life because their legal gender does not match their gender identity. Abusive requirements and the lack of legislation mean that trans people are stuck with documents that do not match their gender identity which becomes a repeated source of harassment, unfounded suspicion, and even violence. The RA Ministry of Justice should ensure that every person becomes able to change their gender in official documents without any interference.



Public transportation is something that should be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of identity. Everyone using public transit should feel safe and supported, mentally and physically, for the entire duration of their trip. Unfortunately, feeling unsafe on public transportation is the reality in LGBT folks. The state shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without barriers or exceptions, in which the free movement of people is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with the prevention and combating of crimes.



LGBT couples who choose to celebrate their commitment by getting married should be entitled to many of the same rights and protections as opposite-sex couples which will open the door to new financial planning opportunities for them: claiming social security benefits based on their spouse’s work history, leaving unlimited assets to each other, providing coverage for each other through their health insurance plan, enjoying the same property owner survivorship rights.





The right to a nationality is a fundamental human right. It implies the right of each individual to acquire, change and retain a nationality despite their gender identity or sexual orientation. No LGBT person shall be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality, nor denied the right to change their nationality.



To deny a person the right to express who they are, is to deny them the right to be them. The right to freedom of expression includes the right to express one's sexual orientation and gender identity without hindrance, as well as the freedom to seek, receive and impart information on issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity. Freedom of self-expression makes one feel better, feel complete, become happier, more confident, and most importantly, more motivated. It is the state's duty to protect the rights of all – whomever they love, whomever they are.



Works of art reveal the complexities of a wide range of gender identities and human couplings—expressions that can connect LGBT people and allies today with a vibrant past and inclusive future.





There is no protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity that would insure the voting rights for LGBT people in Armenia. Voting is a key part of our participation in society and having our voices heard in the issues that affect us all, and we have the right to vote regardless of gender identity. States should create and maintain a safe and enabling environment that is conducive to the exercise of the right to participate in public affairs.



Bullying, harassment and exclusion of LGBT people in educational institutions often driven by stigma and prejudice rooted in deep cultural beliefs about gender roles is a big problem faced by significant number of LGBT people in Armenia. Everyone has the right to express their gender, and it is unlawful to harass or treat people differently because of their identity or orientation. The state should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Access to essential services such as non-formal education programs is often denied to LGBT people. We should promote a nondiscriminatory and inclusive approach to development that ensures that all people – including those who face discrimination, stigma, exclusion, and thus may have limited access to a country's benefits, legal protections, or social participation – are fully included and can participate in and benefit from development processes and activities.





LGBT people rights activists are regularly attacked, arbitrarily arrested and detained during demonstrations, their homes and offices frequently raided and broken into, and they are a subject of intense smear campaigns. Armenia should take appropriate measures to ensure that the right to freedom of expression can be effectively enjoyed, without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. The law enforcement authorities should take appropriate measures to protect the participants in peaceful demonstrations in favor of the human rights of LGBT persons from any attempts to unlawfully disrupt or inhibit the effective enjoyment of their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.



Many LGBT individuals have difficulty accessing basic services where they feel included and accepted. The community is often refused to be served because of who they are. We should strive to create an affirming and inclusive environment for LGBT people requiring a combination of understanding them as a population and treating each LGBT person as a unique individual.



Freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief is the cornerstone of the international human rights framework, and the right to freedom of religion or belief of all human beings during their life course, including that of LGBT persons, must be recognized. Religious authorities have a responsibility to ensure that religion and tradition are not utilized to promote discrimination of persons based on their sexual orientation and gender identity





Everyone has the right of access to medical health care and to benefit from medical services. Promoting access to health care and expanding efforts to improve the health of LGBT people are necessary to ensure that LGBT people have a long and healthy life.



Discrimination in the workplace is one of the most common phenomena faced by LGBT people despite many laws and policies in place which impacts the community's life and well-being. The RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, as well as the Health Labor Inspectorate should pay sufficient attention to the issue, to work with employers through seminars and courses to explain the prohibition of discrimination when hiring or working.



Violence against LGBT people is a serious public health problem in Armenia. Those who survive violence are usually left with permanent physical and emotional scars. LGBT survivors also often face significant barriers to safety and accessing services, such as harassment by police, unintended outing, discrimination by service providers, and a lack of culturally responsive services that can result in revictimization. LGBT people as a member of society, has the right to security and the state should take the responsibility of ensuring that.







LGBT couples often face barriers to growing their families and fight for equal adoption rights. Adoption can be a great way for LGBT people or same-sex couples to realize their dreams of parenthood. Additionally, it proves to have both personal and economic benefits.



While LGBT families have unique characteristics, like all families they are built upon relationships of mutual support, commitment and love. The question of the rights of children raised in LGBT families should form part of the wider dialogue about children raised in relationships based on love and care that fall outside of traditional marriage.



Over the years, privacy-invasive laws, practices, and norms have been used to oppress LGBT individuals by stigmatizing individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBT rights are greatly linked with privacy. Thus, the state should ensure that the usage of personal data advances the benefits of LGBT communities and ensures the balance between public health and individual privacy.



November 20 is the Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), a day to memorialise those who have been victims of transphobia and homophobia. On this day, we, the activists fighting for the trans people' rights, are trying to draw the public attention to discrimination, violence, hate speech, and injustice towards the community members.

From January to November 2022, we collected 94 cases of hate crimes against transgender people, including physical and psychological violence, destruction of property, rape, extortion, robbery, disclosure of personal information and kidnapping; the cases were committed both by family members, colleagues, friends of transgender people, and public officials.

It should be noted that during the recent months, the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO has been working in an emergency situation, trying to respond to the increased cases of violence, discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes against transgender people, doing everything possible to ensure the safety and well-being of the trans community.

#TDOR2022






## “LITERATE COMMUNICATION AND ONLINE ACTIVISM” TRAINING IMPLEMENTED

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, with the financial support of Pink Human Rights Defender NGO, conducted a training on “Literate Communication and Online Activism” for transgender activists from August 1 to 5, 2022. The training was aimed at increasing the level of social involvement of transgender people in the Republic of Armenia by fighting against gender norms and stereotypes.





During the five-day training, 18 selected transgender people gained new knowledge about communication, digital activism, media literacy, cyber security, mobile activism, and working with data and human rights protection mechanisms. The participants worked individually with experts, received advice on reducing calls for violence and hate speech against the community on social media, shared their new ideas with the attendees and developed informational materials during practical activities to promote a positive image of trans people and an atmosphere of tolerance.

Transgender activist and the Founding President of Right Side HRD NGO Lilit Martirosyan launched the training. She gave an opening speech highlighting and welcoming the involvement of transgender people in activism in recent years, as well as thanked all the activists fighting for human rights, freedoms and common values on the front lines paving the way for TRANS LGBTIQ people who continued to be oppressed by their family members and Armenian society and were often forced to hide their gender identity and sexual orientation.

On the first day of the training, the participants learned how to competently manage social pages and use social media by making the most of it. As a result of group discussions and activities, the participants developed materials with different contents to share on their social pages.

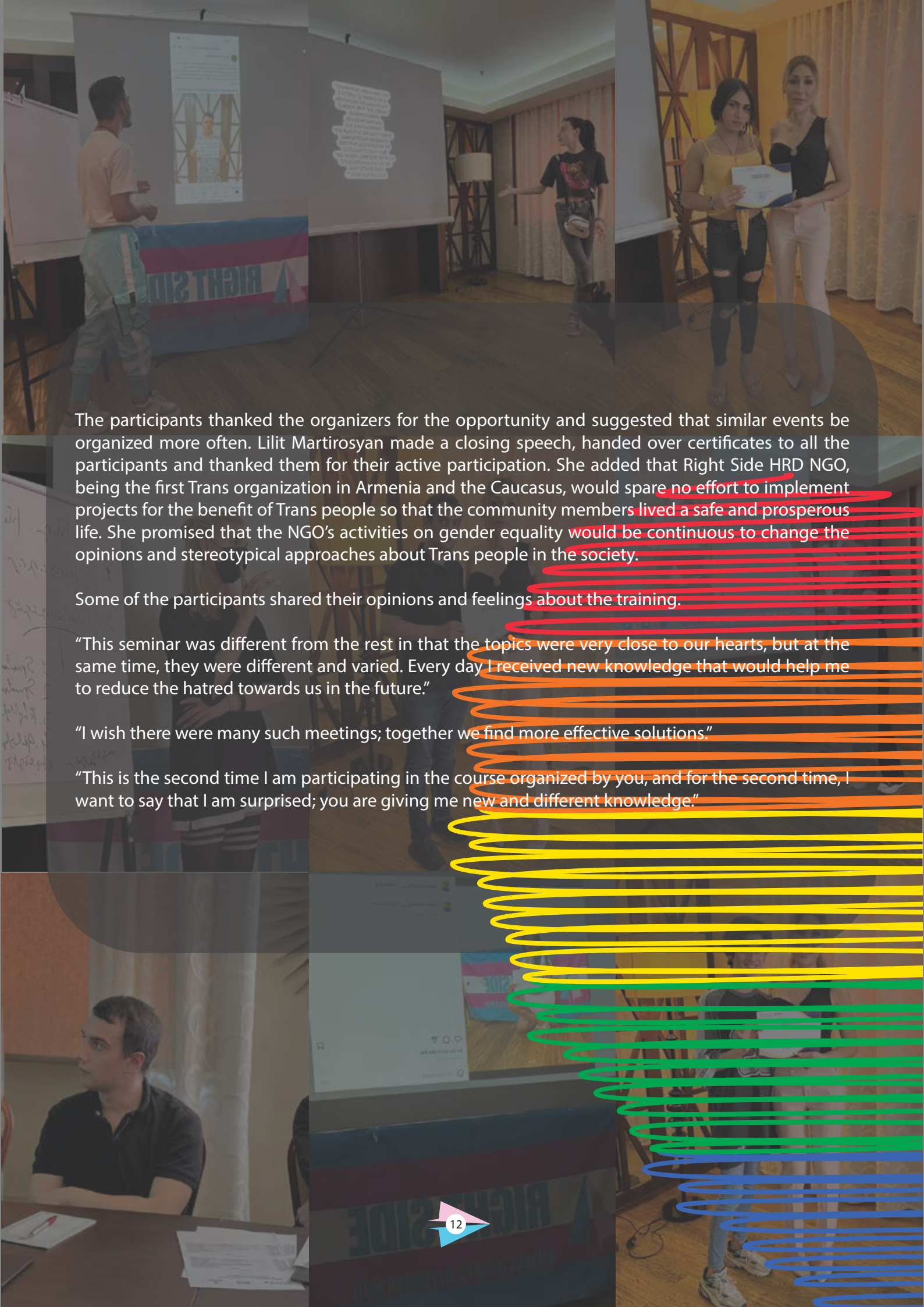
Continuing the discussions, on the second day, the participants learned about the rules of competent speech and ethics during activism, how and on what topics it was necessary to talk to the audience to reduce hate speech on social media. Under the guidance of the trainer, the participants studied social platforms and then presented their works.

The third day of the training was dedicated to cyber security and data protection, self-care, and the activists' physical and mental safety. During various discussions, the participants spoke about the consequences of publishing personal data and developed special steps to prevent similar cases while being involved in activism.

During the fourth day, the participants learned about fundamental rights and protection mechanisms, about a number of examples of successful public campaigns, and started working on promoting a positive image of trans people.

On the fifth day of the training, the participants discussed how to find allies outside the community through strategic communication, cooperate with media representatives, and increase the community's visibility.

At the end of the training, the activists developed a strategic communication plan, which they would use during their activism.



The participants thanked the organizers for the opportunity and suggested that similar events be organized more often. Lilit Martirosyan made a closing speech, handed over certificates to all the participants and thanked them for their active participation. She added that Right Side HRD NGO, being the first Trans organization in Armenia and the Caucasus, would spare **no effort to implement projects for the benefit of Trans people so that the community members lived a safe and prosperous life.** She promised that the NGO's activities on gender equality **would be continuous to change the opinions and stereotypical approaches about Trans people in the society.**

Some of the participants shared their opinions and feelings **about the training.**

"This seminar was different from the rest in that the **topics were very close to our hearts, but at the same time, they were different and varied. Every day I received new knowledge that would help me to reduce the hatred towards us in the future.**"

"I wish there were many such meetings; together we **find more effective solutions.**"

"This is the second time I am participating in the course organized by you, and for the second time, I want to say that I am surprised; you are giving me **new and different knowledge.**"

# SEX WORKERS ACCESS TO THE GLOBAL FUND PROJECTS IN ARMENIA



The survey findings clearly show that sex workers face significant challenges to access Global Fund programs in Armenia. The low information attainment of the consultation participants and their reliance on health programs indicate their low socio-economic status and social inclusion. Additionally, the high rate of income instability among the sex workers often makes them invisible living in the margins of the society by promoting their exclusion from different health programs. Sex workers by the nature of their work are more likely to be isolated from the mainstream society and their social isolation limits their ability to obtain the resources available for their health and wellbeing.



  
**RIGHT SIDE**  
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO



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 seven 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.

SWAN - Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network  
Red Umbrella Fund



December 17



## THE SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ADVOCACY NETWORK (SWAN) STAFF PROVIDED TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE RIGHT SIDE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO



On December 5-8, 2022, the Sex Workers's Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) team members organized a workshop at the Right Side HRD NGO community center to empower the Right Side HRD NGO representatives and to exchange advocacy knowledge with them. The purpose of the meeting was to support the organization in promoting the protection of sex workers' social rights and developing leadership skills through a series of meetings with both the staff of the organization and representatives of other NGOs, activists and community members fighting for the sex workers rights.

Our NGO with the support of the Sex Workers's Rights Advocacy Network will implement an advocacy project in 2023-2024, conducting research on the sex workers' social protection, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and will initiate advocacy activities.

It should be noted that the Organization, being a member of SWAN for about three years, has implemented and continues to implement a number of projects aimed at the protection of sex workers' rights, well-being, safety, health care, etc.

SWAN - Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network



## COMMUNITY MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS IN ARMENIA

Honorable Ambassador Nico Schermers, The Ambassador of the Netherlands in Armenia was working in the Right Side HRD NGO's Trans LGBTIQ community center. He met the representatives of the community, talked with them, listened to their problems and existing challenges of LGBTIQ people. Community representatives were excited to spend the day with the Ambassador. Embassy of Armenia in The Netherlands





## "WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY" ACADEMY FOR LGBTIQ LEADERS IMPLEMENTED

The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO funded by a grant from the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) with the support of the UK Government implemented an academy for LGBTIQ activists the aim of which was to promote the efforts of the civil society to increase the participation of underrepresented communities in the promotion and implementation of the WPS agenda in Armenia.

Within the framework of the 7-day academy, 18 TRANS LGBTIQ people had the opportunity to gain new knowledge about the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, UN Security Council resolutions related to the WPS agenda (1325, 1820, 2250, 2122...), as well as other international resolutions on women's and human rights, conflict transformation, peacebuilding ways and mechanisms that would contribute to the inclusion of LGBTIQ people in the efforts to create a peaceful society and to advocacy for the inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in peacebuilding processes. The participants have learned to use their knowledge and advocacy tools to present the LGBTIQ community issues and challenges to the state and the international community, as well as to promote the inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in the WPS agenda.

On the first day of the academy, Arpi Balyan, Fem Library Co-Founder, and Lilit Martirosyan, Right Side HRD NGO President conducted the training.

Martirosyan made an opening speech, and presented the project in general, the aim of the academy, activities, and actions to be taken during and after academy. She spoke about the problems of GBTIQ people in the RA Armed Forces, the existing legislative gaps and things necessary to do.

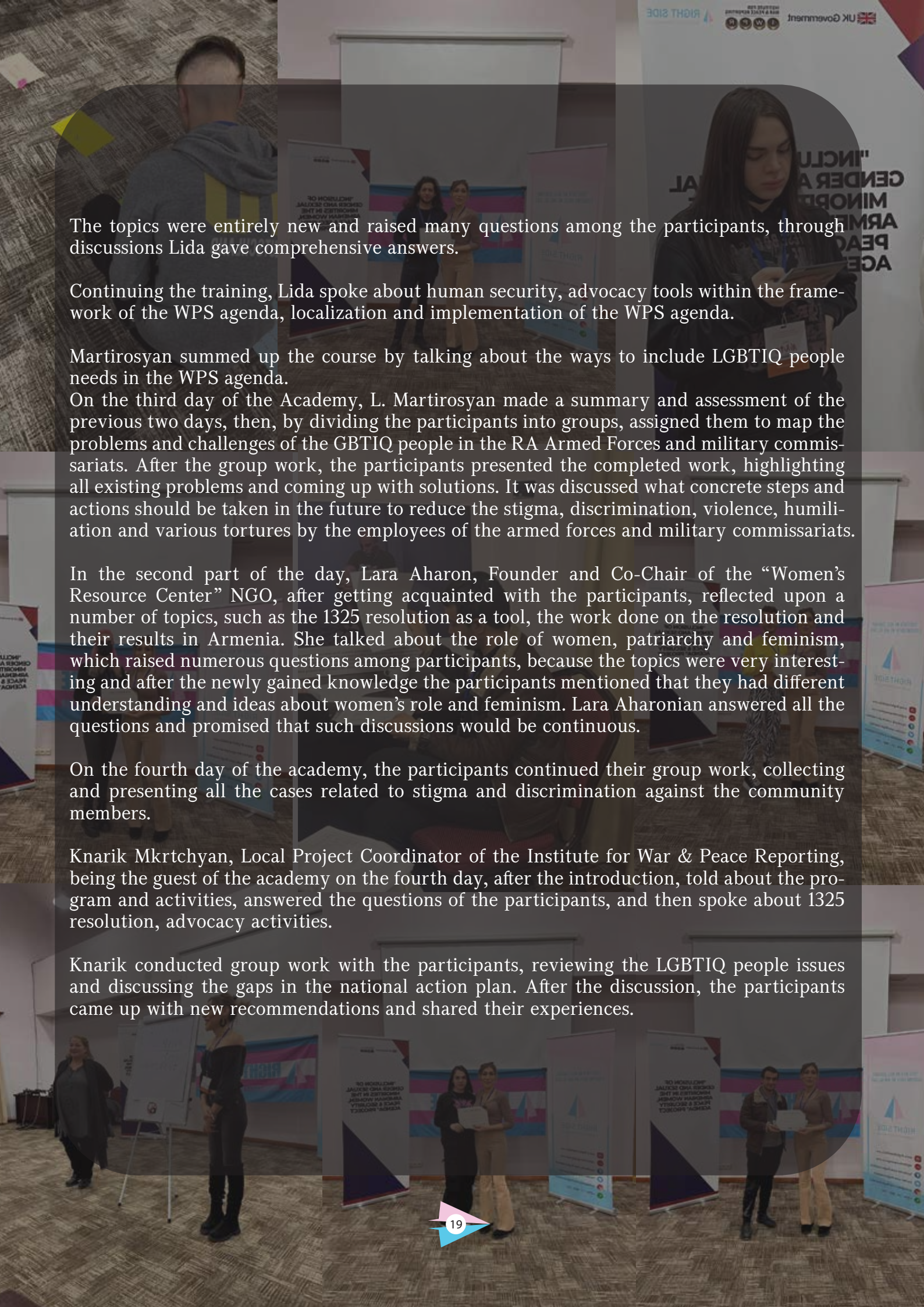
Through practical work, the participants mapped the problems existing in the RA Armed Forces and presented the issues and dangers they had faced during the war.

In the second half of the day, Arpi Balyan continued the training, talking about the stages, levels and types of conflict, described obstacles and challenges that women face in peacebuilding processes.

Continuing the day, A. Balyan introduced to the participants the queer feminist anti-militarist project "I'm talking to you, you are not listening to me" realized in 2017, showed the participants footage and monologues from the performance, which raised many questions and led to different discussions.

On the second day of the academy, Lida Minasyan, "Women's Agenda" NGO Co-Founder was invited as a trainer, who spoke about the following topics in the first part of the day:

- The role of the United Nations in peacebuilding.
- What is the UN Security Council?
- What is the WPS agenda?
- Adoption of UN Security Council (SC) Resolution 1325.
- Related UN Security Council (SC) resolutions



The topics were entirely new and raised many questions among the participants, through discussions Lida gave comprehensive answers.

Continuing the training, Lida spoke about human security, advocacy tools within the framework of the WPS agenda, localization and implementation of the WPS agenda.

Martirosyan summed up the course by talking about the ways to include LGBTIQ people needs in the WPS agenda.

On the third day of the Academy, L. Martirosyan made a summary and assessment of the previous two days, then, by dividing the participants into groups, assigned them to map the problems and challenges of the GBTIQ people in the RA Armed Forces and military commissariats. After the group work, the participants presented the completed work, highlighting all existing problems and coming up with solutions. It was discussed what concrete steps and actions should be taken in the future to reduce the stigma, discrimination, violence, humiliation and various tortures by the employees of the armed forces and military commissariats.

In the second part of the day, Lara Aharon, Founder and Co-Chair of the “Women’s Resource Center” NGO, after getting acquainted with the participants, reflected upon a number of topics, such as the 1325 resolution as a tool, the work done on the resolution and their results in Armenia. She talked about the role of women, patriarchy and feminism, which raised numerous questions among participants, because the topics were very interesting and after the newly gained knowledge the participants mentioned that they had different understanding and ideas about women’s role and feminism. Lara Aharonian answered all the questions and promised that such discussions would be continuous.

On the fourth day of the academy, the participants continued their group work, collecting and presenting all the cases related to stigma and discrimination against the community members.

Knarik Mkrtchyan, Local Project Coordinator of the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, being the guest of the academy on the fourth day, after the introduction, told about the program and activities, answered the questions of the participants, and then spoke about 1325 resolution, advocacy activities.

Knarik conducted group work with the participants, reviewing the LGBTIQ people issues and discussing the gaps in the national action plan. After the discussion, the participants came up with new recommendations and shared their experiences.

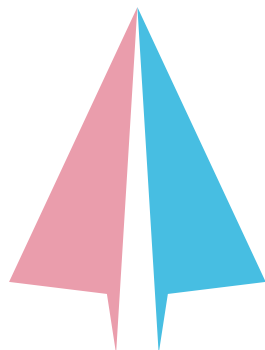


On the fifth and sixth day of the academy, Right Side HRD NGO Lawyers Sona Harutyunyan and Artur Margaryan spoke about legislative gaps, presented ways to protect oneself from gender-based violence and hate speech. The lawyers mapped the problems with the participants, and then suggested continuing the meetings in the organization. A secret voting was held and the best 8 activists – the WPS agenda Ambassadors were chosen, who will later have meetings with the representatives of the RA Ministry of Defense and the military commissariats of various regions, advocating for the inclusion of LGBTIQ issues in the WPS agenda and in the National Action Plan of Armenia on UNSCR 1325.

On the last day of the Academy, Lilit Martirosyan summarized all the days, made a closing speech, handed out certificates, thanked the participants for their active involvement, then added that the Right Side HRD NGO would spare no effort to promote the implementation of a number of legislative reforms for the benefit of TRANS LGBTIQ people.

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