



TRANS NEWSLETTER

September October 2023

No.30

<i>“BUILDING TRANS MEDIA INFLUENCE THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND CONTENT CREATION” PROJECT LAUNCHED-----</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>“WOMEN* ARE DIVERSE. GENDER-INCLUSIVE EMPOWERMENT CAMP WAS HELD---</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>THE LEGAL TEAM OF RIGHT SIDE NGO WILL PROVIDE REPRESENTATION IN THE CASE OF THE MURDER OF THE TRANS WOMAN.-----</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>ANOTHER LEGAL VICTORY-----</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>RIGHT SIDE NGO REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED IN THE RED UMBRELLA ACADEMY IN WARSAW-----</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>WE CALL FOR REDOUBLED EFFORTS TO REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF MEN WHO BEAT THE TRANS WOMAN-----</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>HE INVESTIGATOR STOPPED THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION IN THE CASE OF TORTURE BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION-----</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>MEETING-DISCUSSION OF ORGANIZATIONS OF THE SECTOR TO OVERCOME CRISES-----</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>WITH THE HELP OF RIGHT SIDE NGO LAWYERS, THE PARENT OF AN LGBTIQ PERSON WILL RECEIVE A PENSION-----</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>SOCIAL AID PROGRAM FOR RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANTS-----</i>	<i>11</i>

“BUILDING TRANS MEDIA INFLUENCE THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND CONTENT CREATION” PROJECT LAUNCHED



With the financial support of ILGA Europe, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO is implementing the project with the theme of “Building Trans Media Influence through Capacity Building and Content Creation”, within the framework of which a series of important stories about trans people living in Armenia and Central Asia will be published, which will contribute to increasing the visibility of trans people’s issues. For this purpose, in August of 2023, a series of meetings were organized in the community safe space of Right Side NGO, in which various representatives of the Trans and LGBTIQ community were invited to participate in order to discuss their ideas on the topic and make suggestions. During the meeting, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO staff members and LGBTIQ activists also developed their communication skills by participating in training aimed at increasing activists’ knowledge and skills in formulating messages, understanding audiences, and launching online campaigns on social media.



The meeting was chaired by Communications expert Anna Evoyan, with moderation support from Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO staff member Milena Abrahamyan. Attendees engaged in a lively discussion, each suggesting what topic they would like to raise public awareness about, and what interesting stories or experiences there are that are specific to the trans community and are usually overshadowed by the general public due to lack of information and prejudice. These initial ideas and suggestions will later serve as a guide for Right Side NGO staff when collecting stories and conducting interviews. By developing these proposals, it will be possible to create multi-content media materials on the life, solidarity, sexuality, self-expression, and unique life experiences of trans people, making the reality and experiences of the trans community of Armenia and the region more visible. The stories will be published in the form of photo stories, podcasts, and interviews.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, implementing this project, aims to inspire and motivate trans people and change the public’s opinion about them by sharing stories representing real-life experiences.

“WOMEN* ARE DIVERSE. GENDER-INCLUSIVE EMPOWERMENT CAMP WAS HELD



Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO with the financial support of the Equality Fund carried out Women* Are Diverse. Gender-Inclusive Empowerment Camp aimed to impart leadership skills and empower individuals operating in various sectors. This camp was a continuation of the Trans Camps initiated by the Right Side NGO and this year was held in the format of an academy, which gave the participants the opportunity to study more deeply and gain comprehensive knowledge about gender issues, LGBTIQ activism in the region, human rights, feminism, and other topics included in the agenda. About 30 trans, non-binary, women, their family members, activists, members of the feminist movement, representatives of industry organizations, supporters, and other interested persons participated in the Women* Are Diverse. Gender-Inclusive Empowerment Camp.

The first day of the camp started with a panel discussion on human rights, during which Sona Harutyunyan from the legal team of Right Side NGO presented the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the necessary skills to prevent cases of rights violations, and also mentioned what important changes have taken place in the new in the criminal code. Then, through group discussions, the participants analyzed the situation of the trans and LGBTIQ movement in Armenia and what steps can be taken to empower it. There were meetings with representatives of the sex worker community, discussions on innovative activism practices, and the development of effective communication skills. On the second day of the academy, a panel discussion was held with representatives of the organizations operating in the field, with the participation of the Global Foundation for Trans Rights Protection Protection, Pink Human Rights Defender NGO, and Parents for Equality NGO, moderated by Lilit Martirosyan, the founder and president of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO. The representatives of organizations presented in detail what services they provide to the beneficiaries, how LGBTIQ community members and supporters can cooperate with them, and listened to the recommendations of the camp participants. Discussions were held regarding the prevention of ongoing discrimination and violence against Trans and LGBTIQ persons and the development of effective and quick response mechanisms to support victims. After the panel meeting, discussions were held on feminism and transfeminism in Armenia, leadership and advocacy, gender identity, and sexual orientation. At the end of each panel meeting, the participants had the opportunity to brainstorm their concerns with the speakers involved and receive answers. In addition, the two-day camp created an opportunity for the participants to talk about intrapersonal problems in the LGBTIQ community and ways to solve them, resulting in strengthened bonds.

At the end of the Women* Are Diverse. Gender-Inclusive Empowerment Camp, Lilit Martirosyan made a closing speech, handed over certificates, thanked all the participants for their active participation, noting the great importance of education and self-education in building a free, democratic country and an inclusive society, then added that Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, being the first Trans organization in RA and the Caucasus, will spare no effort in implementing educational programs also in the future that will lead to reforms for the benefit of Trans LGBTIQ people so that the members of the community live a safe and prosperous life.

THE LEGAL TEAM OF RIGHT SIDE NGO WILL PROVIDE REPRESENTATION IN THE CASE OF THE MURDER OF THE TRANS WOMAN.

As we have already reported, on August 20 of this year, a 28-year-old trans woman named Adriana was brutally murdered in her own apartment in Yerevan. In order to hide his tracks, the criminal also burned the apartment of the trans woman. The friends of the murdered trans woman called Lilit Martirosyan, the founder and president of Right Side NGO at around 4:30 p.m. on the same day, and informed her about the murder.

A criminal proceeding was initiated in connection with the case, according to the features of Article 155, Part 1 and Article 264, Part 2, Clauses 2 and 6 of the RA Criminal Code. The day after the murder, on August 21, at 02:40 a.m., the 26-year-old suspect from the Armavir region was found at the Bavra border checkpoint, arrested, and transferred to the Central Department of the Internal Affairs Police. He was presented to the body conducting the proceedings and questioned about the circumstances of the incident, during which he admitted that he committed the murder, after which set the apartment on fire and tried to cross the RA state border through the Bavra border checkpoint. According to the decision of the preliminary investigation body, the 26-year-old man has been arrested. Administrative and evidentiary operations continue to be carried out with his participation.

According to the request of the family members of the murdered trans woman, the legal teams of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO and Pink Human Rights Defender NGO have been involved in this case and will provide legal representation at all stages of the case.

We will continue to follow the course of not only this, but also other criminal cases involving Trans and LGBTIQ persons, consistently documenting and collecting cases of discrimination, and we urge the RA Police to conduct a proper investigation and punish the guilty to the full extent of the law.





INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE RETURNS CONFISCATED
MONEY TO TRANS WOMAN,
DENYING HER INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG TRAFFICKING



ANOTHER LEGAL VICTORY

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO informs that thanks to the persistent efforts of the organization's legal team, as well as increasing public visibility of the case and a number of letters addressed to the RA state bodies, the RA Investigative Committee has returned the 27,000 USD seized from the trans woman.

As we previously reported, on July 27 of this year, a trans woman alerted the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO. She reported that the police were conducting a search of her apartment on suspicion of illegal drug trafficking. The police seized the trans woman's personal cell phones and \$27,000 in cash in the apartment, which the trans woman had accumulated through years of sex work.

Although no drugs were found in the trans person's apartment and she has only the status of a witness in the criminal case, for months the Investigative Committee did not return the phones and money seized from her, depriving her of the right to manage her property and leaving her without the necessary means of living. On July 28, the legal team of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO submitted a petition to the Investigative Committee regarding the return of the property, in addition, Lilit Martirosyan, the founder, and president of the Right Side NGO, raised the alarm about the incident on her Facebook page, as a result of which publications were posted on several news websites. In addition to this, letters were sent by the organization to various state bodies of RA, urging to keep this case in the center of attention and calling for an impartial investigation in criminal cases related to Trans and LGBTQ persons, to refrain from any form of discrimination and to return the money and mobile phones confiscated from the trans woman as soon as possible, restoring her right to manage her property.

On October 6 of this year, the Investigative Committee, not finding any illegal behavior in the trans woman's actions, returned the money and property confiscated from her for over two months.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO will continue to do everything to protect the rights of Trans and LGBIQ sex workers, focusing on criminal cases involving these and other Trans and LGBIQ individuals, consistently documenting and collecting cases of discrimination about them speaking out both national and internationally until justice is restored.

RIGHT SIDE NGO REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED IN THE RED UMBRELLA ACADEMY IN WARSAW

From October 15 to 17 of this year, the representatives of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO participated in the Red Umbrella Academy in Warsaw, which was organized by the European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance (ESWA). The academy aimed to improve sex workers' access to HIV prevention and treatment services. The program was divided into three workstreams:

Capacity building,
Research,
Advocacy.

During the academy, training sessions took place on access to combination HIV prevention tools, including PrEP. Challenges faced by the sex worker community, as well as their needs and barriers to accessing services, were addressed. Participants exchanged experiences and discussed the vulnerability of sex workers, Trans LGBTQ people, as well as migrants due to stigma and discrimination in society and other challenges.

Representatives of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO spoke about the new project launched by the organization, which is funded by the European Alliance for Sex Workers' Rights and aims to increase access to PrEP for representatives of the sex worker community in the Republic of Armenia through advocacy.

As the first Trans and sex worker community-based organization, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO prioritizes ensuring access to HIV prevention tools for the Trans LGBTQ, sex worker communities and will continue to expand its work to achieve positive change in that direction.





ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՔՆՆՉԱԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ

WE CALL FOR REDOUBLED EFFORTS TO REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF MEN WHO BEAT THE TRANS WOMAN

On the night of March 13-14 of this year, at the intersection of Amiryan-Zakyan streets, more than ten masked persons with batons attacked a trans woman, brutally beating her. The trans woman ran away, and then, noticing the patrols on duty in the area, approached them to ask for help, but before the patrols approached the scene, the predators managed to flee. On the same day, half an hour after this incident, the above-mentioned men beat another trans woman in the territory of the Yerevan Municipality, causing injuries of varying degrees, besides targeting two other trans women on Mashtots Avenue, who managed to escape. The trans woman contacted the police regarding the incident. The legal department of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO has been involved in the case and provides representation at all stages of the case.

It is worrying that 6 months have passed since this incident, but the police have not managed to reveal the identity of the perpetrators, regardless of the fact that the trans woman stated that she managed to see the faces of some of the men, and there were many cameras in the area, and through the study of their videos, it is possible to identify the abusers, especially since some of them were not masked.

In the absence of a law criminalizing discrimination against Trans and LGBTIQ persons and imperfect law enforcement practices, police inaction further deepens the already-formed atmosphere of impunity and keeps members of vulnerable groups in a constant atmosphere of fear. Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO calls on the RA police to redouble their efforts to identify and prosecute the members of the organized group that committed gender-based violence against trans women.

THE INVESTIGATOR STOPPED THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION IN THE CASE OF TORTURE BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A year ago, H.A. appealed to Right Side Human Rights Defender 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 applied to Right Side NGO and asked to take over the protection of his interests as a victim, as a result of which, from October 5, 2022, the lawyer of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO was involved in this case as the authorized representative of the victim H.A.

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

Already in September 2023, the investigator of this case made a decision to stop the criminal prosecution against 4 defendants, on the basis of not having committed the alleged act.

The legal team of Right Side NGO filed an appeal to the court, demanding to cancel the termination of the criminal prosecution against G. L., M. N., G. B., and R. G., rejection of the complaint by the head of the procedure for crimes against the state authorities of the RA General Prosecutor's Office V. Avetisyan 02.10.2023 the decisions. We will continue to protect the interests of the victim until justice is restored, and we condemn any type of violence, especially if it is caused by a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or other personal characteristics.

The investigator stopped the criminal prosecution in the case of torture based on sexual orientation



MEETING-DISCUSSION OF ORGANIZATIONS OF THE SECTOR TO OVERCOME CRISES



With the financial support of the Equality Fund, a meeting-discussion on effective response to crises and assessment of the needs of LGBTIQ persons took place in the community safe space of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, which was attended by representatives of organizations of the sector and community members.

Representatives of Right Side NGO, Pink Human Rights Defender NGO, Women's Resource Center NGO, and Global Foundation of Trans Rights Protection and community members discussed both the crisis caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war since 2022 and the impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis on LGBTIQ people and their relatives. As a result of these crises, there are many immigrants and resettled people in RA today, many of whom are members of the LGBTIQ community, which makes them doubly vulnerable.

The organizations presented the support they provide to LGBTIQ people, and also there was an exchange of experience to develop the necessary capacities to overcome the crisis. As a result of conversations with community members, the involved public organizations made an assessment of the needs of LGBTIQ people, which will enable them to make their next steps according to these needs.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO gives great importance to cooperation with the organizations of the field, especially in the current conditions of crisis, and is sure that this meeting will help the involved organizations to serve more effectively in protecting the rights and ensuring the well-being of vulnerable groups, in particular, LGBTIQ people.



WITH THE HELP OF RIGHT SIDE NGO LAWYERS, THE PARENT OF AN LGBTIQ PERSON WILL RECEIVE A PENSION

A.E., the mother of a member of the LGBTIQ community, applied to Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO and reported that she has reached her retirement age, but the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia rejected her application for a pension. In particular, the rejection of the application was based on the fact that the period from January 1, 1992, to May 25, 1999, was not included in the work experience, because, although there is a note in the workbook, that the applicant worked in the Sevan branch of the Dilijan knitting factory during that period, there is no information about the organization in the electronic database, so it is necessary to apply to the court.

On May 23 of this year, the legal team of Right Side NGO sent a letter to the RA Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, N. Mkrtchyan, with a request to once again make a request to the National Archives of Armenia and find out whether there are any documents related to A.E. in the archival records related to the Dilijan knitting factory. In response to that application, a letter was sent to the organization, stating that on June 7 of this year, the Unified Social Service made a request to the State Register Agency of Legal Entities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, and after receiving the answer, the issue of calculation of A.E.'s work experience, appointment (rejection) of pension will be examined again.

On October 4, 2023, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO received a response that the application was satisfied, and A.E. was included in the payment list for October.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO will continue to provide legal services to the representatives of the Trans LGBTIQ and sex worker communities, as well as to the family members and supporters of the community, ensuring full protection of their rights and exclusion of discrimination.

SOCIAL AID PROGRAM FOR RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANTS



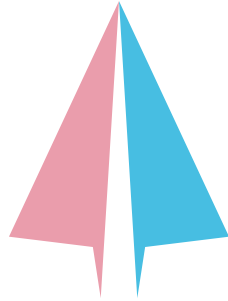
With the financial support of OutRight International, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO implemented a social assistance program aimed at alleviating the challenges faced by LGBTIQ immigrants who have found themselves in dire straits as a result of conflict and persecution.

Beneficiaries of the program could be LGBTIQ immigrants from Russia and Ukraine who moved to Armenia due to the Russian attack on Ukraine, the subsequent mobilization, crisis, and the adoption of a new bill by the State Duma of the Russian Federation, which exclusively prohibits any “medical intervention directed at changing a person’s sex”, and also invalidates the legal recognition of gender in official documents for trans people.

As part of the social assistance program, 15 LGBTIQ immigrants received one-time financial assistance that could be used to pay for housing rent, utility bills, and other essential needs. In addition, a total of 25 LGBTIQ persons received parcels of essential food and hygiene items.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO has always stood by the side of marginalized groups and has been at the forefront of protecting and supporting the rights of the LGBTIQ community. In addition to this social assistance program, the organization will continue to provide LGBTIQ people with legal and psychological assistance, as well as regularly organize courses, camps, and other events in which LGBTIQ people both from Armenia and abroad can participate. ers of the community, ensuring full protection of their rights and exclusion of discrimination.





RIGHT SIDE

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO



RightSideNGO.com



rightsidengo@gmail.com



RightSideNGO



RightSideNGO



RightSideNGO



+374 - 11 - 880 - 770