

TRANS NEWSLETTER

November 2023



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AN ANTI-CORRUPTION TRAINING WAS HELD FOR TRANS AND LGBTQ PEOPLE

GLOBAL FUND FOR
WOMEN
Champions for Equality.

 **RIGHT SIDE**
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO

With the financial support of the Global Fund for Women, a training was held with the participation of young Trans and LGBTQ people in the community safe space of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, the core of which was the capacity building to identify corruption and fight against it. The training was conducted by Lilit Martirosyan, the founder, and president of Right Side NGO.

Corruption is a challenge that many societies face, and Armenia is no exception. Through active discussions, the participants tried to discover what possible corruption risks exist in Armenia, whether the situation has positive or negative dynamics, what are the main vulnerable spots and what legislative reforms can be suggested to eliminate them. The training focused on various aspects of corruption, including how to detect corruption, the negative impact of corruption on society, and the importance of transparency and accountability. It was discussed separately what corruption risks the members of vulnerable groups face, particularly Trans and LGBTQ people, and how it is possible to create support mechanisms for them in the current conditions. The participants were introduced to various tools and methods of preventing and fighting corruption, considering the anti-corruption strategy of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO as an example.

Right Side NGO gives great importance to the construction of a society based on trust, honesty, integrity, and responsibility, excluding corruption, and this meeting was another step on the way to face new challenges and continue the organization's activities effectively.



RIGHT SIDE NGO HOSTED REPRESENTATIVES OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA NGO



On October 25 of this year, the staff of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO hosted Sandra Sjögren, Project Manager of the Equal Rights & Independent Media (ERIM) organization, and Tania Schaal, Project Officer, at the organization's office, presenting the results of the project funded by ERIM and introducing the Right Side NGO's activity.

Right Side NGO was one of the beneficiaries of the Equal Rights & Independent Media organization's "Covid-19. Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability" project, which started in January 2021 and lasted 6 months. The project was implemented in cooperation with Human Rights House Yerevan and aimed to support civil society, independent activist communities, and independent media to continue their work and provide legal and psychological support to vulnerable groups during the pandemic.

Within the framework of the "Covid-19. Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability" project, Right Side NGO provided 147 psychological counseling sessions to its employees, board members, trans volunteers, and activists, in addition, a four-day rehabilitation vacation was organized in Dilijan city for 6 employees of the organization and 3 board members. During the vacation, through experience sharing and mutual aid groups, the organization staff had the opportunity to overcome professional burnout and return to work with renewed strength.

The staff of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO also presented its current projects and the challenges faced by human rights organizations and members of the Trans LGBTIQ and sex worker communities in the region, while representatives of ERIM talked about their future projects and grant programs.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO highly appreciates the mission of the Equal Rights & Independent Media organization and hopes to continue effective cooperation aimed at strengthening civil society and protecting democratic principles, fundamental freedoms, and human rights.

REPRESENTATIVES OF RIGHT SIDE NGO PARTICIPATED IN THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF ILGA EUROPE

From October 25 to 28 of this year, Lilit Martirosyan, the founding president of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO and the program coordinator participated in the ILGA Europe annual conference in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia.

More than 450 activists, human rights defenders, and representatives of organizations of the sector from 54 countries in Europe and Central Asia participated in ILGA Europe's annual conference. The theme of this year's conference was "Rising to the moment". In the current global crises, organizations are required to constantly change their strategies to respond to emergencies effectively. Still, it is also important to discuss how organizations can focus on long-term goals in such conditions. To address these issues and challenges, the conference program was divided into two main themes: "Resilience of the Movement" and "Solidarity and Cohesion within the Movement".

Representatives of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO participated in panel discussions, meetings, and social events, and on October 26, the participants of the forum together celebrated Intersex Awareness Day. In addition, Lilit Martirosyan took part in a meeting where the new communication project of the Right Side NGO – Building Trans Media Influence through Capacity Building and Content Creation, was discussed. In the framework of the project, which is financed by ILGA Europe, it is planned to publish a series of important stories about trans people living in Armenia and Central Asia contributing to increasing the visibility of trans people's problems and eliminating prejudices.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO will continue effective collaboration with ILGA Europe to build a future based on equality, inclusion, and accountability for vulnerable groups, in particular Trans LGBTIQ and sex workers.



THE REPRESENTATIVES OF RIGHT SIDE NGO PARTICIPATED IN THE “POLICE OPERATING IN DIVERSE SOCIETIES” TRAINING IN STRASBOURG



From October 24 to 26 of this year, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO Lawyer and Project Coordinator participated in the regional seminar for law enforcement representatives and civil society representatives from the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership beneficiaries on the theme of “Police operating in diverse societies”. The workshop was organized by the Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division of the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France.

Within the framework of the regional seminar, more than 60 representatives of law enforcement structures civil society, and non-governmental organizations exchanged experiences during three-day discussions and participated in workshops aimed at solving various challenges related to the promotion of equality and diversity based on European standards and instruments. In this context, participants were introduced to the recently published training manual “Police Education for Equality and Non-Discrimination at the local level”, a practical tool providing guidelines on how to embed diversity principles in the work of law enforcement effectively.

The employees of the Right Side NGO presented the situation in Armenia, the organization’s current court cases, the specifics of work with vulnerable groups in Armenia, and the reasons for distrust of the police and state authorities by Trans LGBTQ people.

The seminar has been an important learning and exchange opportunity for Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO in terms of best practices of integrating human rights frameworks in police protecting vulnerable groups in countries of the region, which can be useful for the Armenian context.



MEETING DISCUSSION IN CONNECTION WITH TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE. REMEMBERING ADRIANA

November 20th is honored around the world as Transgender Day of Remembrance, every year on this day we join our voices to remember those who became victims of transphobia. On the occasion of the Transgender Day of Remembrance, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO organized an event entitled "Remembering Adriana" in respect of Adriana, a trans woman who was killed and burned in her apartment on August 21 of this year, and whose brutal murder was followed by thousands of comments on social networks glorifying and encouraging murder, containing hate speech and death threats. In the Republic of Armenia today, violence and discrimination against trans people are not only not decreasing, but also increasing, a vivid proof of which are the annual reports and the alerts on physical and other types of violence against trans people published every month by Right Side NGO.

The event dedicated to Transgender Day of Remembrance was attended by the mother of the murdered trans woman Adriana, representatives of diplomatic structures and organizations operating in the field, and members and supporters of the Trans and LGBTIQ community. During the meeting, the mother of the murdered trans woman Adriana shared her memories and stated that she would fight until the end to reveal the circumstances of her daughter's murder. Lilit Martirosyan, the founder, and president of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO addressed the guests with a welcome speech, and then a panel discussion on the situation of the rights of trans people took place with the participation of lawyers Artur Margaryan and Sona Harutyunyan from Right Side NGO and Ara Karagyozyan from the Pink Human Rights Defender NGO, who are involved in the case of Adriana's murder as protectors of the interests of her successor. The lawyers presented the current situation in the Republic of Armenia, cases of discrimination against Trans and LGBTIQ people in state bodies, as well as some details in the case of Adriana's murder, which do not contradict the confidentiality of the investigation. A new social video "Remembering Adriana" filmed by Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO was presented, followed by a panel discussion "The voice of Trans people", during which activists from the Trans and LGBTIQ community shared their personal experiences and pointed out the steps that can be taken to reduce the community stigmatization, discrimination and violence. At the end of the meeting, Maria Papamichail, the political affairs officer of the EU delegation, made a speech expressing her condolences and emphasizing the importance of the protection of human rights and building a democratic society, without any discrimination.

Adriana's tragic murder is not the only story that resonates in the hearts of all transgender people who hear hate speech every day and are subjected to all kinds of stigma, discrimination, and violence at home, on the street, in state and medical institutions, and elsewhere. In 2023 alone, dozens of cases of violence against transgender people were documented by Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, to which a fair and proper response could have prevented Adriana's murder. Unfortunately, unlike many other countries, Armenia does not keep separate statistics on cases of hate speech, hate crimes, and discrimination against trans people, and the mass media does not cover discrimination and violence against trans people, the topic is only covered by internal political speculations, reinforcement of discrimination and within the framework of spreading hate speech.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO firmly believes in the power of education and awareness to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices. On Transgender Day of Remembrance, we not only light candles in memory of victims of transphobia but also call for concrete actions that can change this situation:

State bodies:

- take appropriate legal steps to ensure the legal gender recognition and name change of transgender persons, based on the right to self-determination, and spiritual and physical integrity, eliminating the need for coercive medical interventions.
- update the draft law on equality to include the prohibition of discrimination based on gender identity and gender self-expression.
- provide by law based on hatred protection of transgender people from crimes and hate speech, documenting incidents, and how to report to other OSCE participating countries.
- To make the current curricula in the RA educational system inclusive from the point of view of the rights of transgender persons and to teach inclusiveness, sexuality, and gender issues.
- implement appropriate measures to fairly investigate all cases of violence, hatred, and discrimination against transgender people.
- stop encouraging hatred, discrimination, and ridicule towards transgender people.



RA Police:

- Ensure the safety of trans persons and all the rights granted to them by the RA constitution to the RA police, the prosecutor's office, the human rights defender, and relevant bodies.

Media:

- avoid using incorrect and misleading terminology and stop promoting discrimination against transgender people.

- cover the issues related to transgender people based on the principles of inclusiveness and sensitivity.

- stop feeding wrong prejudices and stereotypes about transgender people, presenting them as sick people who want to destroy Armenian traditions and culture.

- respect the personal lives of transgender persons and cooperate with transgender persons when preparing news materials about them.



RIGHT SIDE NGO LOGO GOT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STATUS BY LAW

On November 16 of this year, the logo (trademark) of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO was registered by the RA Intellectual Property Office attached to the RA Ministry of Economy and granted legal protection in class 45, that is, Services in the field of public relations to protect human rights. By registering a trademark, an organization gets the exclusive right to represent the logo, preventing unauthorized use by other organizations and individuals in their activities.

The registration of the logo enables Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO to use its visual identity in public relations initiatives even more effectively from now on and to obtain legal protection of the logo.

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Happy International Women Human Rights Defenders Day!

November 29

Today, November 29, the world celebrates the International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders!

We congratulate all women human rights defenders and admire your strength, resilience, courage and tireless work that inspires building a more equal and inclusive future.



THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR OF RIGHT SIDE HRD NGO PARTICIPATED IN THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE IMPACT OF THE ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENT ON THE RIGHTS OF LGBTIQ+ PERSONS IN KOSOVO

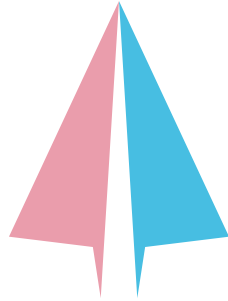
From November 23 to 25 this year the program coordinator of Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO participated in the Regional Conference on the Impact of the Anti-Gender Movement on the Rights of LGBTIQ+ Persons in Pristina, which was organized by the Center of Social Group Development, LGBTI Equal Rights Association, Centre for Equality and Liberty Kosovo in cooperation with the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit of the CoE.

The conference aimed to promote dialogue and cooperation in the face of growing anti-gender sentiment.

In the “Position of trans women in the movement and society” section of the conference, the program coordinator of the Right Side NGO made a speech, presenting the situation of the rights of LGBTIQ people in Armenia. She highlighted the crisis created as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh war and displacement, which has left a lasting impact on the region and exacerbated the vulnerability of the Armenian LGBTIQ+ community. She also addressed the disturbing growth of hate speech in the Republic of Armenia, which was especially aggravated after the tragic murder of trans woman Adriana on August 20 of this year, when the Internet was flooded with a new wave of hate speech, violence and death calls and threats against Trans LGBTIQ people. Adriana’s murder is yet another reminder of the violence and prejudice that continues against the LGBTIQ community, especially trans individuals. All of this poses a serious threat to the safety, mental health, and general well-being of community members.

The conference was an important opportunity for the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO to establish relations and exchange experience with the Balkans and Caucasus partners. We will continue to work effectively with NGOs and activists in the region to jointly create a future based on equality, inclusion, and accountability for vulnerable groups, particularly Trans LGBTIQ individuals.





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