

<i>THE RIGHT SIDE NGO CONDUCTED POLICY AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM REVIEW AND CRISIS RESPONSE TRAINING</i>	2
<i>THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION AGAINST VAHE YEGHIAZARYAN WAS TERMINATED ON THE GROUNDS OF NON-JUSTIFICATION</i>	3
<i>JUNE 2023 REPORT LEGAL DEPARTMENT</i>	4
<i>THE TEAM OF THE RIGHT SIDE NGO ORGANIZED AN EVENT TO STRENGTHEN THE FUNDRAISING STRATEGY</i>	5
<i>JUNE 30, 2023, THE NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES WHO VISITED THE RIGHT SIDE NGO</i>	6
<i>THE RIGHT SIDE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH RUSSIA'S TRANS AND LGBIQ COMMUNITY, DUE TO THE NEW LAW THAT SEVERELY RESTRICTS HUMAN RIGHTS</i>	7
<i>CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN LGBTIQ MIGRANTS IN ARMENIA</i>	9
<i>TRANS AND LGBIQ SOLIDARITY FORUM WAS HELD</i>	10
<i>WITH NO DRUGS DISCOVERED FROM THE APARTMENT SEARCH, THE TRANS WOMAN WAS ARRESTED, THEN SET FREE</i>	11

THE RIGHT SIDE NGO CONDUCTED POLICY AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM REVIEW AND CRISIS RESPONSE TRAINING



The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO with the financial support of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights (RFSL) held a meeting with the participation of the organization's employees and activists of the LGBTIQ community. The purpose of the meeting was to review and improve the policies of the organization through discussions and equip the staff with the skills to respond to crises and effectively fight against them.

During the meeting, the NGO's staff and volunteers reviewed the policies of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO followed by a crisis response course, which aims to help the team prepare for unexpected situations and respond quickly to crises.

Participants conducted a comprehensive review of the organization's structure, conflict of interest policy, advocacy program, strategy, and security. They examined the organization's strategy, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, seeking to highlight opportunities for improvement and innovation that would ensure the organization's continued progress. Through brainstorming and teamwork, the team developed new approaches to address challenges more effectively and efficiently.

Crisis response training enables each team member to know their role and responsibility in the event of a possible crisis, be prepared for various scenarios, master a clear sequence of steps, and be able to confidently take action in accordance with the organization's mission and goals.

The crisis response training consists of the following stages:

Test, re-evaluate, and improve the organization's anti-crisis policy.

Assess the organization's crisis prevention and response actions.

Identify gaps and strengths.

Build experience and muscle memory of anti-crisis operations among team members.

Develop crisis recovery policies.

The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, assessing the existing risks in the Republic of Armenia and taking into account the many cases of violence and discrimination registered during the last year, gives great importance to review the policies of the organization and the implementation of regular trainings for effective response to crises, so that the staff is equipped with the necessary knowledge and abilities.



THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION AGAINST VAHE YEGHIAZARYAN WAS TERMINATED ON THE GROUNDS OF NON-JUSTIFICATION

As we have already informed, on July 31, 2022, Lilit Martirosyan, the president of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, reported that a user under the name of Vahe Yeghiazaryan publicly called for violence and death threats against trans people on the YouTube social platform. Many people also voiced hate speech and threats of violence in the comments of the video.

A few days before that incident, the same person cursed and beat a transgender woman A.N. in the area of the Rossia cinema in Yerevan while showing it in a live stream. The video showing the violence was widely circulated on the Internet, accompanied by hate speech and calls that encouraged violence. A.N. applied to the police regarding the incident. During the preliminary investigation, Vahe Yeghiazaryan admitted his guilt, compensated the damages suffered by the trans person A.N. and reconciled with the latter.

As a result, the criminal prosecution against Vahe Yeghiazaryan was terminated on the grounds of non-justification.

At the same time, during the initiated criminal proceedings, another person, Karen Arayan, who encouraged Vahe Yeghiazaryan to commit violence against transgender people and who was also charged with making public calls for violence, stated that he did not call for any violence against transgender people. We hope that Karen Arayan and Vahe Yeghiazaryan will behave in a law-abiding manner, refraining from any harassment towards Trans and LGBTIQ people.

The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO consistently collects and documents cases of discrimination and violence against Trans and LGBTIQ persons and urges the RA Police to conduct a proper investigation to identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable to the full extent of the law.

Once again, we are calling

RA police, prosecutor's office, Human Rights Defender, and relevant bodies to ensure the safety of trans-LGBTQ persons, and all the rights granted to them by the RA constitution, Diplomatic representatives, and international funders, who direct their resources and funds to the improvement of justice and establishing equality in RA, to take steps to prevent discrimination against community members and others.

June 2023 report

On cases in the legal department of the
Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO





THE TEAM OF THE RIGHT SIDE NGO ORGANIZED AN EVENT TO STRENGTHEN THE FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

On June 28 of this year, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO organized a fundraising strategy planning meeting in its office. The meeting was carried out with the financial support of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), which has provided six years of grant funding to the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO. At the end of the EED program, this meeting was planned for the organization to evaluate and strengthen its fundraising strategy, planning the next steps so that it has a stable financial position in the coming years and continues to work for the benefit of the Trans LGBTIQ and sex worker communities.

During the meeting, the NGO's fundraising officer presented to the staff the main aspects of effective fundraising. The team thoroughly familiarized itself with the organization's major donors and explored possible ways to attract new donors. By analyzing the current fundraising landscape, staff identified areas for improvement, expanded the potential support base by building a list of donors, and based on that, developed the organization's fundraising strategy for the next 3 years. In addition to reviewing the fundraising strategy, during the meeting, the staff of the Right Side NGO reviewed the financial policy of the NGO and made the necessary adjustments to ensure that the financial policy is in line with best practices. Optimizing its financial policy, the organization aims to increase transparency, accountability, and trust for both donors and supporters.

The meeting also promoted teamwork: by involving all staff in this process, the Right Side NGO ensured that each member had a stake in the organization's future financial stability and success.

We would like to point out that thanks to the continuous support of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO has developed from a small organization, strengthened and over the years has become a leading community organization of Trans and sex workers in Armenia and the region, which, despite the recent crises caused by Covid19 and the war, continued its work and implemented many local and international projects. Thanks to these programs and the organization's advocacy policy, there have been changes in the practices of state bodies for the benefit of Trans and LGBTIQ people. In addition, thanks to the financial support of the European Endowment for Democracy, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO has been able to provide free legal and psychological support and organize educational programs for Trans LGBTIQ and sex workers, their family members, and supporters for years. Now, at the end of the EED program, the Right Side NGO is confident that with the implementation of the newly developed fundraising policy, the organization is ready to face the challenges ahead and will continue to defend the rights of Trans and LGBTIQ people with the same initiative.

JUNE 30, 2023,
THE NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
WHO VISITED THE RIGHT SIDE NGO'S





THE RIGHT SIDE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH RUSSIA'S TRANS AND LGBTIQ COMMUNITY, DUE TO THE NEW LAW THAT SEVERELY RESTRICTS HUMAN RIGHTS

On July 14 of this year, the State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted a new bill that exclusively prohibits any “medical intervention aimed at changing the sex of a person” and also invalidates the legal recognition of gender for trans people in official documents and public records.

Unfortunately, this bill is not the only case of restricting the rights of Russia’s Trans and LGBTIQ community. In the last decade, there has been a worrying escalation of legislative developments in Russia, which deeply violates the rights of Trans and LGBTIQ people. In 2013, the passage of the “gay propaganda” law began state persecution of the LGBTIQ community, which continues to this day. The potential consequences of this new law are extremely worrying, with experts claiming that it will lead to an increase in the number of suicides among trans people. Additionally, banning hormone therapy could lead to the creation of a black market for hormone medication, putting the health and safety of trans people at risk. It is also deeply concerning that the law invalidates legal recognition of gender, leaving trans people in legal uncertainty and making them more vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and violence.

As a trans and sex workers' community-based human rights defender organization, the Right Side NGO strongly condemns the adoption of this law in Russia, which further marginalizes and discriminates against the Trans and LGBTIQ community. Trans-specific health care is an essential component of comprehensive health care that promotes the mental health and social inclusion of trans people. By limiting trans health care and legal gender recognition, the bill undermines the principle of equal rights for citizens and perpetuates discrimination and violence against trans and LGBTQ people.

We express our unwavering solidarity with Trans and LGBTQ people in Russia, whose rights and well-being are at risk today. Since Russia's attack on Ukraine, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO has included hundreds of LGBTIQ immigrants from Russia and Ukraine in its list of beneficiaries. We will continue to provide assistance and fight for the equality and well-being of Trans and LGBTQ people not only in the Republic of Armenia, but also in the region. Together, we must build a future where the rights of every individual are protected and respected, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation.

CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN LGBTIQ MIGRANTS IN ARMENIA



Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 and due to the new persecution of LGBTIQ persons by the Russian government, there have been large-scale migration flows of citizens of those countries to the Republic of Armenia, who have found themselves in a difficult situation as a result of the conflict and persecution. Representatives of vulnerable communities who face social exclusion and limited access to vital resources are particularly affected by crises, as evidenced by the applications of hundreds of Trans and LGBTIQ immigrants to the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO who have been included in the NGO's list of beneficiaries over the past years. Recognizing the challenges faced by Trans and LGBTIQ immigrants, the Right Side NGO, with the financial support of OutRight International, initiates a new program to provide social support to LGBTIQ persons from Russia and Ukraine living in Armenia.

According to the statistical data of the RA Migration Committee, a total of 8,562 Russian and 385 Ukrainian citizens received residence status in the Republic of Armenia in 2022, of which 19 Russian and 484 Ukrainian citizens also requested asylum. In 2023, migration flows continue and it is expected that a new influx of Trans and LGBTIQ immigrants will soon be registered due to the [adoption of a new bill](#) by the State Duma of the Russian Federation on July 14 of this year, which exclusively prohibits any “medical intervention aimed at changing the sex of a person” and also invalidates the legal recognition of gender in official documents for trans people.

Who can apply?

LGBTIQ persons from Russia or Ukraine who currently live in the Republic of Armenia can apply for the social support program. The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO will form a special committee responsible for the thorough examination of each application and assessment of needs. After examination of the applications by the members of the commission, the persons applying for support will receive an answer within ten days. To apply, please fill out the following application form.

The 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. Through such programs, we aim to create an environment of solidarity and create an equal and inclusive society where the rights and dignity of each individual will be protected and respected.

Contact us for questions or additional information:

The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO

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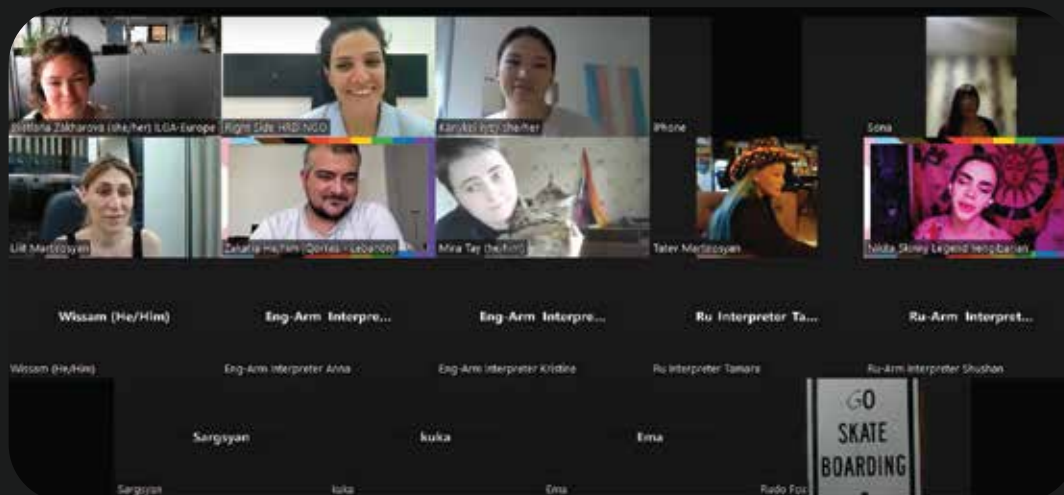
TRANS AND LGBTIQ SOLIDARITY FORUM WAS HELD



On July 3 of this year, with the financial support of ILGA Europe, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO organized an online forum of Trans and LGBTIQ Solidarity, which aimed to bring together representatives of the Trans and LGBTIQ community in the region, trans activists from Eastern Europe and Central Asia to promote the exchange of experience and knowledge, and to strengthen solidarity among LGBTIQ people.

The Trans and LGBTIQ Solidarity Online Forum was moderated by Milena Abrahamyan, and the speakers were Lilit Martirosyan, president of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, from Armenia, Zakaria Nasser, a founder member of the Qorras group, from Lebanon, and Kanykei Kyzy, a trans activist from Kyrgyzstan. In her speech, Lilit Martirosyan presented the situation in Armenia, referring to the crisis caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war in the region and its consequences, intensifying pressures on human rights defenders, and cases of continuous violence and discrimination against trans people. Zakaria Nasser presented how Lebanon's dire economic situation (in March of this year Lebanon's annual inflation reached 264 percent) had a negative impact on the lives of LGBTIQ people and finding sources of funding for LGBTIQ rights organizations. Then the trans activist Kanykei Kyzy introduced the participants to the situation in the countries of Central Asia, thoroughly addressing the problems and legal status of trans people in each country. She noted that despite the differences between separate countries, the problems of trans people around the world are quite similar, and such experience exchange meetings are very important to find solutions to them. The speeches were followed by an interactive question and answer session, during which the participants had the opportunity to engage directly in the dialogue and receive answers to their questions.

By organizing such events, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO aims to create a platform for establishing new connections, sharing experiences and being inspired by each other's activism. We believe that by coming together and learning from each other, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all LGBTIQ people around the world.



WITH NO DRUGS DISCOVERED FROM THE APARTMENT SEARCH, THE TRANS WOMAN WAS ARRESTED, THEN SET FREE

On July 27 of this year, at 9:30 a.m., the trans woman H.T. called the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO and informed that at that moment the police were conducting a search in her apartment. H.T. also noted that according to the investigator, they are going to arrest her. As it became clear later, the apartment was searched to find drugs, but as nothing was found, the trans woman's three phones for personal use, the computer, as well as all the money in the apartment, were confiscated.

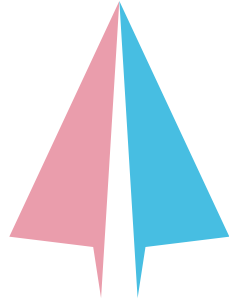
We shall remind, that about two months ago, on June 11 of this year, the same trans woman was brutally beaten by two men in her apartment and her mobile phone was stolen at knifepoint.

Right after the call, the lawyers of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO went to the investigation department of the Kentron and Nork-Marash administrative districts of Yerevan, where the trans woman H.T. was taken after the search. The legal team of the NGO had a meeting with her and assumed her protection. A few hours later, H.T. was transferred to the Investigative Committee, where, after being interrogated in the presence of her defense attorneys, she was released at 4:25 p.m., on the grounds that the need to keep her in prison was no longer needed.

The legal team of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO is involved in both the previous and this case and will provide legal representation at all stages of the case.

The Right Side NGO follows the course of criminal cases involving Trans and LGBTIQ individuals, consistently documenting and collecting cases of discrimination and violence, and will keep this case at the center of its attention, urging the RA Police to carry out a proper investigation.

*Under the pretext of drug possession,
a trans woman's apartment was searched,
she was arrested, and then released*



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