REPORT

on the events that occurred in the Republic of Armenia
from July 17 through August 5, 2016

... I asked, “Ultimately, is it your desire that you see an Armenian policeman in an Armenian uniform?”

He said impatiently and sharply, “Yes! An Armenian policeman, in an Armenian uniform.”

... However, I have not heard a single word about Armenian culture, Armenian art, literature, Armenian science... finally, about the Armenian people for whom it does not make any difference what the ethnicity is and what uniform wears the policeman who demands a bribe from them or who beats them...

... That is a motherland of “an Armenian policeman who wears an Armenian uniform”...

Vahan Teryan. Article ‘Spiritual Armenia.’ 1914

Introduction

On early morning of 17 July 2016, various media outlets disseminated information that the same day at 5 a.m. using arms some members of the Constituent Parliament civic initiative and their sympathizers from the Daredevils of Sassoun group seized the RoA Patrol Police regiment in Yerevan’s Erebuni district.
During the attack several individuals, including policemen, sustained bodily injuries, while Colonel Arthur Vanoyan, a Deputy Chief of the Patrol Police regiment, was killed. The attackers took a number of policemen hostages, including the RoA Deputy Police Chief Vardan Yeghiazaryan and the Yerevan Deputy Police Chief Valery Osipyan.

The demands presented by the group were the release of the leader of the Constituent Parliament Jirair Sefelian and other political prisoners and the resignation of President Serzh Sargsyan. Shortly after that, using armored vehicles, the police units blocked the road to the Patrol Police regiment in Erebuni district\(^1\).

From 17 July on, the Constituent Parliament and the civic initiative We are the owners of our country civic initiative, a number of civic activists, public and political figures staged numerous rallies and marches both in Yerevan and in other localities in the country.

Those rallies and marches were accompanied by brutal interventions and unprecedented violations committed by the police. The police terminated rallies without any grounds, subjected rally participants to violence and beatings, severely violated their civil rights when forcibly taking them to police departments and used stun grenades and tear gas in rally venues.

\(^1\) This incident was preceded by the following events. On 20 June 2016, the RoA Investigations Committee issued a communiqué, according to which sub-machine guns and cartridges had been discovered in a car involved in a traffic accident in Tsitsernakaberd highway in the city of Yerevan. The car driver and the passenger were forcibly brought to a police department on suspicion of illegal possession and transportation of weapons and ammunition. On the same day Jirair Sefelian, a leader of the Constituent Parliament and New Armenia initiatives, was detained on suspicion of having organized those actions. Prior to that, in spring 2016 the police many times searched the apartments of the Constituent Parliament members and detained Pavel Manukyan’s brother Tatul Manukyan in whose apartment cartridges had been found. It should be noted that in April 2015 Jirair Sefelian, Pavel Manukyan and other members of the Constituent Parliament were detained on suspicion of preparing mass unrest in the venues where public events were to be held. However, on May 4 their measure of restraint was changed and they were set free. The members of the said opposition initiatives were always persecuted by the authorities and on 31 January 2015 they were subjected to beatings by the police when their car convoy entered the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh.
On 31 July, the armed group laid down their weapons and surrendered to law-enforcement officers; however, protest demonstrations went on.

**Assemblies’ observation results**

**On 17 July,** several hours after the seizure of the Patrol Police regiment members of the *We are the owners of our country* civic initiative disseminated a statement over the social network Facebook urging the public to stage, without a further ado, a rally in Liberty Square at noon. The observers from Helsinki Committee of Armenia and numerous media representatives, who were in the Square at that time, reported that the police prevented the planned rally and forcibly taken numerous would-be rally participants to police departments from Liberty Square and from other parts of the city. Many of those detainees were taken to the Police Academy building and to the Interior Troops Unit in Davitashen district of Yerevan.

Besides Yerevan, the police forcibly brought scores of citizens to police departments in the cities of Gyumri and Vanadzor. A.H., one of the persons who had been forcibly taken away, says that he and at least 50 other rally participants were taken by police cars to a hall in the Police Academy building, where they were made to walk between two rows of policemen who subjected them to beating.

While they were held in the hall, the detainees were periodically threatened by police with sub-machine guns, were not allowed to drink water or use toilet facilities and to talk to other detainees. Over the entire period of that time they remained handcuffed.

Those individuals, who did not obey and tried to move or to talk to other detainees, were taken to another room and beaten and then brought back to the sports hall.

The police held the individuals, who had been forcibly taken to police departments, with violation of the time period set by law and violated the detainees’ right to have a defense attorney. Numerous citizens, who are participants of various civic initiatives, were forcibly taken to police departments from their apartments. *Based on the available information, it can be contended that several dozens of people were forcibly taken to police departments.*

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2 Sources: [http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27863670.html](http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27863670.html), observers’ reports and eyewitnesses’ testimonies.
On 18 July, members of *No to Robbery!* civic initiative announced through the social network *Facebook* that they were preparing to hold in *Liberty* Square at 7 p.m. a public discussion of the events that had occurred the previous day. The rally started peacefully, the participants made statements and came up with ideas. Rally participant David Sanasaryan urged the public to join the rally and thus to support the members of the *Daredevils of Sassoun* group. Police General Hunan Poghosyan qualified that as a call for violence.

Policemen started forcibly taking the rally participants to police departments and blocked the movement of those rally participants who wanted to march to the Patrol Police regiment in Erebuni district.

*Later on David Sanasaryan, who had been one of those forcibly taken to police departments, declared that he had been subjected to brutal beating, violence and degrading treatment in a police vehicle and taken to the Interior Troops Unit in Davitashen district of Yerevan.*

The situation in the rally venue remained tense until an agreement was reached between the rally participants and Deputy Police Head Hunan Poghosyan that the police would not obstruct the rally, would release all those individuals who had been forcibly taken to police departments and would allow holding a march in the streets of Yerevan’s Kentron district.

An observer from Helsinki Committee of Armenia noticed that a policeman with a special battalion (“Red berets”) of police who were on duty in the rally venue had brass knuckles, which had a metal part to strike with.

After holding a march in the streets of Yerevan’s Kentron district, the participants reassembled in *Liberty* Square and some time later they went to the section of Khorenatsi Street, which is located near the Police regiment in Yerevan’s Erebuni district and was cordoned off by the police. In the days that followed, rallies were staged there. The atmosphere between the police and rallies participants remained tense.
On 20 July, tensions between rally participants and the police turned into clashes, when rally participants were informed that the police did not address the issue of transfer of food to members of the *Daredevils of Sassoun* group. Some rally participants started shoving and hitting policemen and throwing bottles at the policemen and the police wall.

Many rally participants left the rally venue, while others continued to throw stones, bottles and other things at policemen. The police responded in the same way and also used special means such as tear gas and stun grenades.

Many rally participants declared that policemen used violence against them while forcibly taking them to police departments, whereas ambulances crews at the rally venue were giving first medical aid only to policemen.

Numerous policemen and rally participants were taken to hospitals and many rally participants were taken to police departments. At 10:30 p.m., violence somewhat subsided. A number of rally participants were urging others to exercise restraint and to not antagonize the police.

The situation remained relatively calm until 4 a.m., when having announced in advance that the rally was unlawful, the police terminated it and forcibly took dozens of rally participants to police departments.

According to the video materials published on the internet by various media outlets and to eyewitnesses’ reports, many plainclothes policemen took part in forcibly taking rally participants to police departments and used brute force and excessive violence and numerous individuals were subjected to beatings and tortures both in police departments and in other locations.

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3 See video material at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWxb5eBC6ZM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWxb5eBC6ZM)
Gevorg Tosunyan, a reporter with *Iravaban.net* media outlet who was performing his official duties in the rally venue, was subjected to beating by unknown individuals, who seized the memory card of his video camera and threatened to beat him again, if they see him in rally venues⁴.

According to the official statement issued by the police, “… On the night of 21 July, 136 citizens were brought to the RoA police departments in administrative districts of the city of Yerevan on suspicion of threatening to use violence or of using violence that posed or did not pose a threat to life and health of a representative of authorities.”

**On July 22-25,** the rallies that were staged near the cordoned-off section of Khorenatsi Street were relatively calm. From time to time a number of political and public figures, including Member of Parliament Nikol Pashinyan, leader of the *Union for National Self-Determination* party Paruyr Hayrikyan, member of the *Constituent Parliament* Alek Yenigomshyan, Chairperson of *Asparez* Journalists’ Club Levon Barseghyan and others made speeches. Some of them and their supporters established an Anti-Crisis Council to coordinate rallies. The Council was disbanded on 31 July because most of its members had been arrested. On various days the number of rally participants ranged from 1,500 to 4,000, while the number of participants of the marches held on July 25 and 26 reached 9,000.

⁴ See [http://iravaban.net/133912.html](http://iravaban.net/133912.html)
On July 26, the police issued a statement demanding that rallies be moved from Khorenatsi Street to another location or else rallies will be terminated\(^5\). *It should be noted that according to the RoA Law on Freedom of Assemblies, the Authorized Body that takes into consideration a notification about a rally or that prohibits a rally is a Community Head, in this case the Yerevan City Hall. However, the latter prohibited staging rallies in the areas adjacent to Patrol Police regiment only on July 30\(^6\).*

The participants of the rally staged on July 26 again conducted a march in the streets in Kentron community in Yerevan and at midnight they came back to the cordoned-off section of Khorenatsi Street. The police again terminated the rally and forcibly took 64 rally participants to police departments, including the Chairperson of *Asparez* Journalists’ Club Levon Barseghyan.

According to the communiqué issued by the police, 63 individuals were released, while one person was detained because he was found to be in possession of a homemade handgun\(^7\). On July 27, the police again announced that it was forbidden to stage rallies in the cordoned-off section of Khorenatsi Street and throughout the entire day forcibly took would-be rally participants to police departments.

*Observers from Helsinki Committee of Armenia witnessed how at least 60 persons were forcibly taken to police departments. However, comparing that data with those provided by mass media, it looks like the number of those forcibly taken to police departments exceeded 100; many of them were merely passers-by or residents of nearby buildings."

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\(^6\) See [https://www.yerevan.am/am/announcement/erevani-k-aghak-apetaranis-haytararowt-yowne/](https://www.yerevan.am/am/announcement/erevani-k-aghak-apetaranis-haytararowt-yowne/)

\(^7\) See [http://168.am/2016/07/27/667315.html](http://168.am/2016/07/27/667315.html)
The police refused to reply to a written request lodged by Helsinki Committee of Armenia to inquire about the total number of citizens who had been forcibly taken to police departments. On the 2 following days rallies were staged in Liberty Square. Then rally participants organized marches from there, while **on 28 July** they blocked traffic in France Square for a brief period of time.

On **29 July**, when participants of the march that was launched in Liberty Square reached the intersection of Nar-Dos and Khorenatsi Streets, they unexpectedly turned towards Sari Tagh neighborhood and quickly approached the section from where the territory of the Patrol Police regiment was well-seen. *March participant L.S. later reported that even though he wanted to approach the cordoned-off section of Khorenatsi Street, policemen had advised him to join the march that was taking place in Sari Tagh neighborhood.* About 700 individuals were taking part in the march.

Police officials, including Deputy Police Chief Levon Yeranosyan, demanded that the march participants leave the neighborhood and gave them 5 minutes to do so⁸. The observers from Helsinki Committee of Armenia and numerous eyewitnesses reported that a group of people among the march participants started throwing stones at policemen and then went through the police lines and joined them⁹.

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⁸ As per Article 33 of the RoA *Law on Freedom of Assemblies*, in the absence of the assembly leader or the failure of the latter to fulfill the demand of the Police, the representative of the Police shall at least twice demand by loudspeaker that the participants terminate the assembly, setting a reasonable time period for doing so.

⁹ The events in question can partly be seen in a video material at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cItJYi0zfUa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cItJYi0zfUa)
The observers recognized many of those individuals who are policemen. Policemen immediately threw stun grenades, tear gas and stones at rally participants and started to pursue them. They were joined by plainclothes policemen who were armed with metal bars and truncheons. Those individuals subjected many rally participants and Armenian and foreign reporters to beating and broke their video cameras. As evidenced by observers from Helsinki Committee of Armenia, Deputy Police Chief Levon Yeranosyan exacerbated the tensions between policemen and rally participants by using profanities and shouting “We should finish them off.”

One plainclothes policeman snatched a video camera from an observer with Helsinki Committee of Armenia and returned it only when instructed to do so by a police official.

Eyewitness L.A. said that during clashes he took refuge with a group of people in a store. Then a group of individuals in civilian clothes approached them, took a rally participant out and starting beating, cursing and threatening him with future reprisals, if he takes part in another rally. One of those perpetrators carried a handgun.

According to Ashot Aharonyan, a Press Secretary of the Police, over 100 participants were forcibly taken to police departments during the termination of the rally. 73 individuals, including minors, went to healthcare institutions with various injuries. A damaged eyeball of one of the minors had to be removed, while another participant received multiple burns.
The RoA Investigations Committed opened a criminal case (as per parts 1 and 2 of Article 225 of the RoA Criminal Code) in relation to 29 July events. 26 of the rally participants forcibly taken to police departments were detained, including Vice-President of Heritage political party Armen Martirosyan and political scientist Andrias Ghukasyan who were the rally co-coordinators.

On the same day, individuals in civilian clothes interfered with the rally that was held in Theater Square in the city of Gyumri, who began using obscenities and insulting rally participants and started an argument with them. As a result, employees of GALA and News.am media outlets were subjected to violence. According to rally participants’ reports, there was no uniformed policeman at the rally venue and the police did not respond to calls to police emergency telephone number 102. In protest, rally participants blocked traffic at Sayat-Nova Street. Policemen immediately appeared at the rally venue and forcibly moved rally participants to sidewalks and forcibly took many participants to police departments.

On 30 July, the National Security Service gave an ultimatum to members of the Daredevils of Sassoun group with a demand that they lay down their arms and surrender by 5:00 p.m. The same

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14 Organization of mass disturbances accompanied with violence, pogroms, arson, destruction or damage to property, using fire-arms, explosives or explosive devices, or by armed resistance to the representative of the authorities.
15 See http://news.am/arm/news/339703.html
16 See http://www.tert.am/am/news/2016/08/04/investigative/2097117
17 See http://www.asparez.am/gyumri-hy/gyumri-cuyc-sadrichner_hy/
day, participants of the rally that was held on Liberty Square marched to Baghramyan Avenue, where their progress was arrested by a police-formed human wall and by barbed-wire barricades.

The situation was tense at the rally venue. At 11:20 p.m. a citizen made an attempt at self-immolation, whereupon some participants left the rally venue, whereas some of those who stayed picked up the earlier argument related to a rally venue. Some time later the police removed the barbed-wire barricades and demanded that rally participants move the rally to another location or else the rally will be terminated. Rally participants moved the rally to Liberty Square.

The rallies and marches that were held in Yerevan from July 31 through August 3 were peaceful and no instances of significant police interference were observed. The rally and the march that were held on August 4 were of exclusively peaceful nature; the authorized body was notified about them and it took the notification into consideration.

According to Liberty radio station report, shortly after the end of the rally policemen from a special battalion started forcibly taking to police departments those rally participants who were still

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19 Kajik Grigoryan, who had made a self-immolation attempt, died on July 30. In his 2 August interview, a burn specialist at the RoA Ministry of Health-affiliated Scientific Centre of Radiation Medicine and Burns, former Minister Norayr Davidyants violated medical confidentiality by declaring that K. Grigoryan had been infected with immunodeficiency virus, had drug addiction and had been receiving Methadone maintenance treatment. Video material on the self-immolation incident see at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Hi1q1Ek5s
20 Some of the remaining 1,200 participants wanted to turn the rally into a sit-in, while some others wanted to march to the cordoned-off section of Khorenatsi Street.
21 The police did not allow the participants of the march held on August 3 to move up Baghramyan Avenue. There was no other police interference.
22 The decision of the authorized body was posted at https://www.yerevan.am/am/public-meeting/hh-k-aghak-ats-i-yarowzhan-avetisyani-s-t-oostos-i-in-havak-ew-et-ants-kats-nelow-mas-in-irazekman/
in Liberty Square. Policemen twice attempted to forcibly take to a police department a reporter from Haykakan zhamanak newspaper. Some of the persons who had been forcibly taken to police departments declared that they were not rally participants\(^\text{23}\). All in all, 27 citizens were forcibly taken to police departments\(^\text{24}\).

Putting together information received from mass media, observers’ reports and official statements, there were at least 547 instances of individuals being forcibly taken to police departments from venues of rallies staged over the period from July 17 through 5 August.

**Violence, persecution, detentions and other violations**

**Violence and torture**

Much information was received about widespread instances of police violence against citizens. Particularly cruel violence was used against persons who demonstrated civic activism.

**On 17 July**, at 4:30 p.m. policemen came to civic activist Vaghinak Shushanyan’s work place and “invited” him to get into a police vehicle. In order to avoid a scuffle he got into the vehicle. He was taken to a police troops unit, where he was punched and kicked for several minutes, receiving

\(^{23}\) Video material is at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7JAzlYezhQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7JAzlYezhQ)

\(^{24}\) See [http://verkirmedia.am/low/berman-entakvac-azat-ardzakvac/](http://verkirmedia.am/low/berman-entakvac-azat-ardzakvac/)
blows to his face, head and abdomen. According to V. Shushanyan, he was first approached by Andranik Harutyunyan, a policeman with a special police unit that got the name “battalion of angels.” Even though the latter wore a mask, V. Shushanyan recognized him. A. Harutyunyan grabbed V. Shushanyan around the neck and started delivering blows. He was joined by several policemen and then one of the policemen kicked V. Shushanyan in the chest so severely that the latter was choked. To prevent him from losing consciousness the policemen administered ammonia to his nostrils. V. Shushanyan was released from the police troops unit on the night of July 18, at 2:00 a.m.

On 18 July, participants of a peaceful assembly in Liberty Square Artush Chibukhchyan and Levon Zakaryan sustained various bodily injuries as a result of police actions and a scuffle and were taken to a hospital. The same day, after making a speech using a loudspeaker, David Sanasaryan, a participant of a peaceful assembly in Liberty Square, was forcibly taken to a police troops unit at 7:30 p.m. and held there. While he was forcibly taken to a police troops unit, he was handcuffed and was subjected to severe beating and torture by policemen from the 3rd battalion of the Police Patrol Service. Policemen kicked his head, spit on him and told him to lick their boots. In the police troops unit he lay unconscious for about 10 minutes on the floor. The doctor there only checked his blood pressure. David Sanasaryan sustained multiple bodily injuries; besides, he was diagnosed with concussion.

Andranik Aslanian was among those forcibly brought to police departments on July 18. At about 7:30 p.m., while he was taking part in a peaceful assembly in Liberty Square, he was forcibly taken to a police troops unit. He was subjected to beating and torture by policemen from the 3rd battalion of the Police Patrol Service. On 18 July 2016, many persons were subjected to violence and cruel treatment.

On 19 July, at about 10:30 p.m. Mikael Nazaryan was beaten by policemen in the so-called “Sari Tagh” neighborhood in Yerevan, when he attempted to videotape how policemen fire shots into the air and at people’s feet. He was forcibly taken to a police department but then released. The police took his cellular phone away from him.

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25 See http://civilnet.am/2016/07/18/%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B2%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AF-%D5%B7%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B7%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%AB%D5%B6-%D5%B8%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%AB%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AB-%D5%A4%D5%A1%D5%AA/#.V6A8KhjlPGI
26 Video material: “Video recording of the clashes between rally participants and policemen that occurred in Northern Avenue today https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL602piL498
27 See: http://www.aravot.am/2016/07/18/716892/
On 20 July, at about 1:00 a.m. Arsen Manukayn was forcibly taken by a group of policemen to Erebuni police department from Khorenatsi Street in Yerevan and was subjected to cruel beating there. He was released from the police department at 1:25 p.m.

On 21 July, at about 7:00 p.m. motion picture producer Aram Shahbazyan wanted to meet a friend who was close to the Erebuni police department building; however, he was subjected to violence by policemen from the Patrol Police Service stationed at Sasuntsi Davit and Dzerzhinsky Streets intersection and sustained fracture of his hand.

On 21 July, policemen beat Arsen Ohanyan’s friend Arsen Tadevosyan and broke his jaw. As reported by A. Ohanyan, on 20 July A. Tadevosyan had gone to Khorenatsi Street to take part in public discussion. However, some time later clashes erupted between protesters and policemen. During the clashes A. Tadevosyan was far from that place, in the lower section of Khorenatsi Street. Policemen forcibly took him to Shengavit police department beating him up in the process and then the department policemen went on beating him there.

On the night of August 5, Harutyun Aghlamazyan, a member of the Constituent Parliament, was brutally beaten near his home. Prior to that, he had been taken by plainclothes policemen to the RoA Special Investigations Service to give testimony. Harutyun Aghlamazyan participated in the rallies held in previous days.

According to the official data, from July 19 till early morning of July 30 the number of the policemen and citizens who sustained bodily injuries during clashes is 49 and 86 respectively.

Other manifestations of inhuman treatment

Hovhannes Harutyunyan, a member of the Daredevils of Sassoun armed group who had sustained a gunshot wound, was placed in the intensive care unit of the ‘Hospital for Convicts’ penal institution. On 28 July 2016, his lawyer announced that sanitary and hygienic conditions of the hospital room raise concern. There were insects and cockroaches there, trash and unnecessary things were piled in the corners of the room, which were removed only after the lawyers’ warning.

According to Hovhannes Harutyunyan, he was not able to sleep at night because cockroaches got to his open wound.

Lawyer of Alek Yenigomshyan, a member of the Constituent Parliament, declared that A. Yenigomshyan is in a bad shape\(^{32}\) because the Pre-trial Detention Center of the National Security Service lacks even the elementary living conditions necessary for a person with disability. Alek Yenigomshyan has disability. He is blind and does not have one arm.

**Persecution**

Helsinki Committee of Armenia was alerted to the fact that individuals in civilian clothes would forcibly take civic activists’ friends and family members from their homes, work places and streets in an unknown direction. Subsequently it was discovered that those people had been taken to police departments.

On the morning of July 17, family members of Mikael Nazaryan, a former member of the Constituent Parliament, were taken to a police department in the town of Ashtarak and were released only after he came there. The police told him that the reason for holding him there was to prevent him from participating in the assemblies that were held in Yerevan. After he had been held for 12 hours, the police said that he had been forcibly brought on the suspicion of having committed theft. However, later on no charges were pressed. He spent an entire night in the police department without getting a single meal and had to sleep sitting on a chair. His lawyer’s entry was blocked. He was released only the next day. He spent a total of 32 hours in the police department.

On the morning of July 17, policemen went to the apartment of former member of “No to Robbery!” civic movement Aram Manukyan and dealt severe blows to the door. Only Manukayn’s mother was in the apartment. As she was afraid that the policemen would break the door, the woman opened it and the policemen rushed in. As a result of the policemen’s actions Manukayn’s mother became so unwell that ambulance was summoned twice and eventually she was taken to a hospital.

On 19 July, policemen asked neighbors of Rima Sargsyan, a member of “No to Robbery!” civic initiative and an active rally participant, about her family and collected some information.

On 20 July, officers from the National Security Service invited the father of Baghanis village resident Vika Harutyunyan to the Village Head’s office in order to talk to him. The NSS officers

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\(^{32}\) See: [http://hetq.am/arm/news/69516/nikolay-baxdasaryan%E2%80%A4-enigomshyanychi-karoxanum-o%D5%9Bch-snvel-o%D5%9Bch-normal-sharzhvel%E2%80%A4-paymannery-harmar-chen.html](http://hetq.am/arm/news/69516/nikolay-baxdasaryan%E2%80%A4-enigomshyanychi-karoxanum-o%D5%9Bch-snvel-o%D5%9Bch-normal-sharzhvel%E2%80%A4-paymannery-harmar-chen.html)
wanted to find out whether Vika Harutyunyan would be going or not to Khorenatsi Street in Yerevan to participate in a rally to be staged on the evening of July 20.

On the morning of **July 20**, a brother of an active participant of the rallies and a member of “I am against!” civic initiative Sevak Tsaturyan was taken to Erebuni police department. He was released only after Sevak Tsaturyan reported to the police department.

On the morning of **July 20**, policemen from the police department in the town of Ijevan visited the apartment of Artush Chibukhchyan, a member of “No to Robbery!” civic initiative and an active rally participant, even though he has not resided there for already 4 years. The policemen told neighbors that the head of the police department sent them to detain Artush Chibukhchyan.

**On 22 July**, a father and a brother of the Arshaluys village (Armavir region) resident and an active participant of the rallies staged in Khorenatsi Street in Yerevan Taguhie Ghazaryan were taken from their work places to a police department in the town of Vagharshapat. After they had been held in the police department for several hours, Taguhie Ghazaryan’s father returned home accompanied by three plainclothes policemen. The brother, however, was held there to be released only when Taguhie Ghazaryan comes to the police department. Taguhie Ghazaryan was shown a policeman’s ID and was “asked” to come to the police department to have a talk. Taguhie Ghazaryan alerted Helsinki Committee of Armenia, which provided legal advice and alerted the Human Rights Ombudsman. Due to those measures Taguhie Ghazaryan’s brother was released. Taguhie Ghazaryan received a call from the police department in the town of Vagharshapat. They told her that they were concerned for their citizen and they urged her not to participate in the assemblies held in Khorenatsi Street in Yerevan.

**On 27 July**, at about 2:00 a.m. Armen Mikayelyan, a member of the *Constituent Parliament*, was detained when he was returning home from Khorenatsi Street with his family. The *Constituent Parliament* issued a communiqué about the detention. According to the communiqué, two black cars blocked his way. About 8-10 unknown individuals in civilian clothes came out of those cars, assaulted Mikayelyan and forcibly put him in a car and took in an unknown direction. According to A. Mikayelyan, he was handcuffed and a handgun was placed in his pocket. He was charged under Article 235 of the RoA Criminal Code.

**On 29 July**, at 5:15 p.m. Armenak Kyureghyan contacted Helsinki Committee of Armenia and said that unknown persons in civilian clothes forcibly put Albert Baghdasaryan into a car at Baghramyan Avenue in Yerevan. On the same day the Committee was alerted to the fact that
Hovhannes Ghazaryan and Vahagn Ghumashyan were taken from their homes in an unknown direction by persons in civilian clothes. It was found out later that they were taken to a police department.

On the morning of August 5, the mother of Areg and Sergey Kyureghyan, the members of the Daredevils of Sassoun group, and of civic activist Hayk Kyureghyan was forcibly taken to a police department. According to her husband Armenak Kyureghyan, policemen discovered a hunting knife in her handbag. The sources close to the family say that the knife had been confiscated earlier.33

Tatev Petrosyan, a daughter of the Daredevils of Sassoun group member Ashot Petrosyan, declared that their family members are terrorized and persecuted. From time to time “visits” are made to their homes.34 Her cousin, a son of political prisoner Liparit Petrosyan, was several days earlier forcibly taken from the grandmother’s home to the National Security Service and was told in the process that they “know everything;” “Stay away from all this,” “We are wiretapping your phone calls and we are following you.”

Instances of deprivation of freedom

On July 17 and on several days that followed, policemen were making rounds in Liberty Square in Yerevan and were forcibly taking citizens to police departments without providing any explanation. Policemen were also continuously forcibly taking persons from Khorenatsi Street in Yerevan to police departments.

Citing the official data, Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Vanadzor Office reports35 that over the period of time from 17 through 31 July 2016, 367 persons were forcibly taken to police departments. According to the information provided by media outlets and to eyewitnesses’ reports, the number of those persons was over 675. Over the period of time from 17 through 31 July 2016, 47 individuals were detained and 19 were arrested. As of 3 August 2016, 54 persons were arrested.

33 See http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27901808.html
35 See: http://hcav.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/03.08.2016-%D5%8F%D5%A5%D5%B2%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D6%84-%D5%80%D5%94%D4%B1%D5%8E-%D5%88%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%AB%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-%D5%BE%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%BB%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6.pdf
Obstacles to lawyers and observers’ groups

From 17 July on, there were numerous publications in the press and signals to various human rights organizations that lawyers face obstacles in police departments.

On July 17, Vaghinak Shushanyan was forcibly taken to a police troops unit, where he was subjected to violence. For about 4 hours the lawyer was not allowed to visit V. Shushanyan.

On July 18, the civic observers’ group was prohibited in Vardashen penal institution from meeting with Jirair Sefilian, a leader of the Constituent Parliament political initiative, on the grounds that following the investigator’s decision his contacts with outside world were limited.

On July 23, the administration of Yerevan-Kentron penal institution prohibited civic observers’ group members A. Melikyan and R. Sargsyan from entering any cells for arrested persons and from making observations in the cells. They were not allowed to observe conditions of the cells for convicts or to have a conversation with convicted persons without officials’ presence. The administration did not provide information about the number of arrested and convicted persons held in the penal institution at the time of the visit.

On July 26, relatives of Ashot Petrosyan, a member of the Daredevils of Sassoun armed group who had sustained a gunshot wound, asked lawyers to engage in his defense. However, the lawyers were not allowed to visit him, even though at that time, without informing A. Petrosyan, the court reviewed the issue of his arrest and a public defense attorney took part in the session. Over that period of time A. Petrosyan’s relatives tried to contact the Human Rights Ombusman. However, the Ombudsman would not answer telephone calls. The investigator did not inform A. Petrosyan that his relatives hired lawyers. The said lawyers became engaged in the case only on the next day.

On the July 27 night, Levon Barseghyan, a Chairperson of the Board of Asparez Journalists’ Club NGO, was forcibly taken from Khorenatsi Street in Yerevan to a police department on a suspicion of having cold steel arms. The lawyer was not allowed to visit Levon Barseghyan. Later on, only after representatives of the Armenia’s Human Rights Ombusman had intervened, the lawyer’s meeting with Levon Barseghyan took place. Levon Barseghyan was detained. Two days later a forensic expert commission’s conclusion was received that said that the discovered knife was not cold steel arms. So, the investigator made a decision to release Levon Barseghyan from custody.

On 27 July, David Sanasaryan, a member of the Yerevan City Council and a Spokesperson of Heritage political party, was forcibly taken to an administrative building of the police troops, where he was held for 3 hours without being informed about his status, and then he was taken to the Investigation Committee. Over this entire period the lawyer was not allowed to meet with David Sanasaryan41.

On 30 July, policemen blocked entry of the civic observers’ group (that conducts monitoring of police detention centers) to Yerevan Pre-trial Detention Center and on July 31 policemen prohibited them from entering the territory of the Pre-trial Detention Center42.

Violence against participants of the march-rally held in Sari Tagh neighborhood in Yerevan on July 29

On 29 July, policemen used special means (explosives, light-emitting devices, etc.) against protesters who assembled in Sari Tagh neighborhood in Yerevan. Demonstrators came there after a rally that had been held earlier in Liberty Square. As a result of police actions in Sari Tagh neighborhood local residents were terrorized and were subjected to beating by policemen. According to the neighborhood residents’ reports, when in the evening they stood in their yards, policemen aimed their weapons both at men and women and threatened to open fire, unless residents get inside their homes. The residents got into their homes. However, policemen followed them and forcibly entered their homes, threatened people with weapons and shoved family members in the presence of small children43. The policemen also said that now they knew the location of those residents’ homes and that at 9:00 a.m. they would come and take everyone away.

Many rally participants were taken to hospitals with bodily injuries of various degrees of severity. Rally participant Marat Yavroomyan, who was in Sari Tagh neighborhood with his 15-year-old daughter, was cruelly beaten by policemen. 5 policemen assaulted him and started kicking

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42 See http://news.am/arm/news/339895.html
43 See http://civilnet.am/2016/07/30/%d5%a1%d5%b0%d5%a1%d5%a2%d5%a5%d5%af%d5%be%d5%a1%d5%ae-%d5%bd%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%ab-%d5%a9%d5%a1%d5%b2%d5%ab-%d5%a2%d5%b6%d5%a1%d5%af%d5%ab%d5%b9%d5%b6%d5%a5%d6%80%d5%a8/#.V57JlhjPGg
him in the head\textsuperscript{44}. Marat Yavroomyan got a concussion and sustained various injuries of his arms and legs. He was taken to Izmirlyan Center.

As a result of the special means used by the police the eye of Sayat Harutyunyan, who was not a rally participant, was damaged so that doctors had to remove it. Sayat Harutyunyan is a resident of Gegharkunik region and he came to Yerevan to visit his sisters. In the evening, when he was going home, he got lost and accidentally he ended up in the area where the police action was taking place\textsuperscript{45}.

\textbf{On 29 July evening}, policemen brutally beat Andrias Ghukasyan with truncheons at the rally venue and when he tried to go home they detained him. He sustained numerous bodily injuries. Most of the blows that he received were in the ankles area. According to the \textbf{July 30} statement issued by the group of civic observers that conduct monitoring in police pre-trial detention centers, there are numerous severe injuries on A. Ghukasyan’s body. A. Ghukasyan refused from ambulance services and demanded access to his personal doctor\textsuperscript{46}.

Besides the rally participants, assaulted also were reporters and cameramen who were performing their professional duties. Some of them sustained injuries as a result of the police use of special means, while some others were subjected to violence. Property of media outlets was seized and damaged\textsuperscript{47}.

\textsuperscript{44} See \url{http://civilnet.am/2016/07/30/%d5%b8%d5%bd%d5%bf%d5%ab%d5%af%d5%a1%d5%b6%d5%b6%d5%a5%d6%80%d5%a8-%d5%af%d5%b8%d5%b7%d5%ab%d5%af%d5%b6%d5%a5%d6%80%d5%b8%d5%be-%d5%b0%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%be%d5%a1%d5%ae%d5%a5%d5%ae-%d5%a5%d5%b6-%d6%81/#.V57jxxIjPGg}

\textsuperscript{45} See \url{http://news.am/arm/news/339662.html}

\textsuperscript{46} See \url{http://news.am/arm/news/339895.html}

\textsuperscript{47} See \url{http://www.tert.am/am/news/2016/07/30/reporters/2093601}
Reporter Mariam Grigoryan and cameraman Davit Harutyunyan with “Arajin Iravakan” news program of the Public TV, who were on the air at the time, sustained injuries. According to the communiqué issued by “Arajin Iravakan” news program, policemen subjected Davit Harutyunyan to brutal beating and broke his camera. He also sustained a leg injury caused by an explosion.

While covering the events, reporter Aghvan Asoyan and cameraman Albert Galstyan with “Zham” news program of Armenia TV Company were beaten by unknown persons in civilian clothes. Those persons also snatched and broke their video camera and a microphone.

Reporter Robert Ananyan and cameraman Tigran Badalyan with A1+ TV also fell victim to violence. They were forced to get out of their vehicle and were not allowed to do their work. The reporter sustained burns inflicted by an explosive device. The cameraman was in a shock. Robert Ananyan is in St. Grigor Lussavorich medical center.

Reporters Hovhannes Movsisyan and Karlen Aslanyan and cameraman Garik Harutyunyan from Liberty Radio Station were subjected to beatings. A group of individuals in civilian clothes and armed with truncheons and metal bars assaulted them, when they were returning from the police building to Yerevan city center. According to the reporters, those individuals were police officers, who knew perfectly well that they were assaulting journalists. When beating Movsisyan, they tore his ID and broke the video camera.

Cameraman with internet media outlet Panorama.am Hovik Grigoryan was injured by an explosion while performing his professional duties in Sari Tagh. He merely noticed the explosion and then his leg became immobilized. Hovik Grigoryan did not seek medical assistance; he received treatment at home.

Cameraman of Russian Lifenews TV Tigran Gasparyan was injured too. The police warned him to move to the right side, where it was safer. However, before he got to a safer place, the police
threw explosive devices. The first one exploded right on him and that one was followed by the second, then third and forth ones. And then he felt that he was bleeding.

Cameraman with internet media outlet Lragir.am Harut Vanyan was brutally beaten during violence; he sustained numerous bruises and was taken to a hospital.

The attackers broke and sacked internet media outlet News.am photographer and cameraman Khoren Grigoryan’s video camera. He lost all his videotaped materials.

The persons, including journalists, who sustained bodily injuries as a result of the special means used by the police in Sari Tagh neighborhood in Yerevan on July 29 were taken to St. Grigor Lussavorich hospital in Yerevan. An observer from Helsinki Committee of Armenia noted that those departments of the hospital where the persons who had sustained bodily injuries were receiving medical treatment were controlled by plainclothes policemen. They would decide who can enter or leave the premises and gave instructions to other policemen. Relatives of the injured were denied access to those departments. Only policemen and medical personnel were allowed entry there.

Policemen attempted to forcibly take one of the rally organizers David Sanasaryan from the hospital to a police department. During a brawl he lost consciousness. Policemen declared that they would take him to an intensive care unit so that he could get medical assistance. However, later on it was found out that no medical assistance was given to him and that he was taken to a police department.

Response by the powers that be and by international entities

Until July 21, no representatives of the authorities publicly addressed the incident. RoA Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan spoke briefly about the seizure of the Patrol Police regiment at the Government session held on July 21. He noted that the authorities do their best to resolve the issue peacefully. RoA President Serzh Sargsyan addressed the events only on July 22. In his speech he demanded that members of the Daredevils of Sassoun group “…should exercise restraint and not jeopardize other persons’ lives with their provocative actions and should release hostages and lay down their weapons.”

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48 See http://www.aravot.am/2016/07/21/718029/
49 Video material at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Thg8drA0Z0
On July 30, United Nations Armenia Office issued a statement seconding the appeals by the RoA Human Rights Ombudsman and by other international organizations about an immediate conduct of an investigation and for all parties to exercise restraint and tolerance.  

US Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia H.E. Richard Mills issued a similar statement expressing deep concern about the shocking images and credible reports of violence and excessive use of force by the police to disperse protestors during the night of July 29-30 and by credible reports that journalists and their equipment were specifically targeted by the police during these operations. OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović urged the Armenian Government to ensure that journalists’ rights and safety during times of civil unrest will be protected.

Through the statements issued by his office, Human Rights Ombudsman Armen Tatoyan condemned violations of the legally established procedures for forcibly taking assembly participants to police departments and violence against reporters and expressed his concern about ambulance staff being held in the territory of the Patrol Police regiment.

The negotiations process

After the seizure of the Patrol Police regiment the negotiations were launched between members of the Daredevils of Sassoun group and the RoA National Security Service. The subject matter of the negotiations was, on the one hand, the release of the policemen held in the territory of the Patrol Police regiment and, on the other hand, the transfer of food and necessary medication to the persons in the territory of the Patrol Police regiment and organization of the meeting of the Daredevils of Sassoun group with mass media.

By July 20, the group released 6 of the persons held in the regiment territory; however, the group members claimed that the police did not carry out an agreement about periodic provision of food and medication. Member of the Artsakh Parliament Vitaly Balasanyan got engaged as a

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52 See [http://www.a1plus.am/1478207.html](http://www.a1plus.am/1478207.html)
55 Violation of the said agreement caused clashes between the police and the participants of the rally stages on July 20.
mediator in the negotiations between the law-enforcement agencies and the *Daredevils of Sassoun* group.

As a result of the negotiations, after the last two hostages held in the regiment territory had been released, **on July 23** the group members met with media representatives, answered a number of questions and again presented their demands. The meeting with mass media took place with the violation of the agreement reached between the parties. Member of the group Varuzhan Avetisyan made a statement that V. Balasanyan will no longer take part in the negotiations.\(^56\)

In the days that followed, the group members claimed that the police deprived them of food, communications and electricity.\(^57\) As a sign of protest, the group members burned the police vehicles parked in the regiment territory.\(^58\) After that the police and the group exchanged gunfire and several group members and one policemen sustained wounds.\(^59\)

**On 27 July**, 4 staff members of the ambulance who came to provide medical assistance to wounded members of the group remained in the Patrol Police regiment. The police claimed that the medical personnel in question were hostages. In the words of member of the *Daredevils of Sassoun*

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\(^56\) See [http://www.a1plus.am/1474954.html](http://www.a1plus.am/1474954.html), [http://168.am/2016/07/24/665946.html](http://168.am/2016/07/24/665946.html)


\(^59\) See [http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27881187.html](http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27881187.html), [http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27883074.html](http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27883074.html)
group Varuzhan Avetisyan, the medical personnel will be free to go, when they are replaced by a new ambulance team.\footnote{See https://armenpress.am/arm/news/855368/zinvats-khmbi-andamnery-ppts-gndum-patand-en-vercrel-viravorerin.html, http://www.azatutyun.am/a/27888342.html}

**On 30 July**, the medical personnel was allowed to leave the regiment territory\footnote{See http://www.1in.am/1970410.html} and on the same day the RoA National Security Service issued an ultimatum to the group members to lay down their weapons and to surrender to law-enforcement agencies\footnote{See http://www.sns.am/index.php/am/news/338-30072016}. According to the note posted by Ashot Aharonyan, a public relations person and a head of Information Division of the Police, on his Facebook page, policeman Yura Tepanosyan was killed by a gun shot fired by a sharpshooter from the Patrol Police regiment territory.\footnote{See  http://www.a1plus.am/1477533.html} **On 31 July**, members of the *Daredevils of Sassoun* group laid down their weapons and surrendered to law-enforcement agencies.

**Conclusions**

In the period of time from **17 July to 5 August 2016**, numerous reports about gross violations of human rights were received from media outlets, various individuals and other sources. The reports dealt primarily with instances of the police’s cruel and inhuman treatment of assembly participants, use of excessive force and special means, unlawful detentions, violations of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of speech, violence against reporters, various persecutions of and terror against active citizens and their family members and other similar incidents.

Numerous citizens were forcibly taken to and held in police departments and in police troops units for hours without a good reason. In many cases individuals that had nothing to do with rallies were forcibly taken to police departments from Khorentasi Street in Yerevan or were forcibly removed from that area. Bodily injuries of various degrees of severity were inflicted on persons of various age groups, including minors, through the use of brute force and explosive devices. Lawyers issued statements that hospital rooms where wounded members of the *Daredevils of Sassoun* group were placed were not hygienic and were not conducive to recuperation.

**Putting together the above information, media statements and observers’ reports, Helsinki Committee of Armenia states that over the period of time from 17 July to August 5 2016 the rights**

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\footnote{See http://www.1in.am/1970410.html}
\footnote{See http://www.sns.am/index.php/am/news/338-30072016}
\footnote{See  http://www.a1plus.am/1477533.html}
of many citizens guaranteed by the RoA Constitution, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, domestic legislation and other documents were violated by the actions undertaken and inaction demonstrated by the law-enforcement agencies of the Republic of Armenia.

Violated were rights of assemblies’ participants, of reporters and observers performing their professional duties in rally venues, of persons forcibly brought to police departments and of detained persons, of members of the Constituent Parliament and other civic initiatives and of their relatives, even though those rights are guaranteed by the RoA Constitution and by a number of international treaties. Those are the rights to dignity of human person, to respect for person’s physical and mental integrity, to be free from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment and from discrimination, to liberty of person and to respect for private and family life and for personal honor and good name, to inviolability of home, to property and to freedom to act and freedom of movement, to freedom of expression and assembly as well as the right to legal assistance and to a fair trial.

Violated were the 3 rights for the detained persons that the ‘European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment’ attaches particular importance to, viz. the right of the detained person to have the fact of his detention notified to a third party of his choice, the right of access to a lawyer, and the right to be examined by a doctor of his own choice.

We believe it is important to highlight violations of domestic legislation:

- Police actions during the assemblies organized in the Republic of Armenia from July 17 to 5 August 2016, including termination and prohibition of assemblies, were taken with gross violations of the provisions set in Chapters 1, 2 and 4 of the RoA Law on Freedom of Assemblies. Police interference in the assemblies were undertaken with violations of Articles 78 and 79 of the RoA Constitution and of the principles laid out in Chapter 2 of the RoA Law on Basics of Administration and on Administrative Process.

- The acts committed by plainclothes policemen and persons acting with them in the course of the assembly held in Sari Tagh neighborhood on July 29 explicitly contain features of the corpus delicti specified in Chapters 16, 17, 19 and 21 of the RoA Criminal Code. Policemen performing their duties and police officers present in the rally venue violated many provisions
spelled out in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the RoA Law on Police. Brute force and special means were used against rally participants with gross violations of the provisions laid down in Chapter 4 of the said Law.

- While forcibly taking rally participants to police departments and carrying out proceedings in that regard the provisions set in Chapters 19 and 20 of the RoA Code on Administrative Offences were not complied with and the rights of persons forcibly brought to police departments and of detained persons that are spelled out in Article 267 of the RoA Code on Administrative Offences and in Articles 19 and 63 of the RoA Criminal Code were violated.

**Recommendations**

Observations conducted by Helsinki Committee of Armenia demonstrate that the charges pressed against arrested rally participants and organizers (holding unlawful assemblies, organizing mass disturbances, etc.) are grounded only in their political beliefs and views and their participation in assemblies. Taking that into consideration, they can be regarded as political prisoners. Proceeding from what has been stated above, we demand

- To immediately release arrested rally participants and organizers.
- To conduct a comprehensive and impartial investigation in the criminal cases of the Daredevils of Sassoun group members. To involve international experts in the investigations of deaths of policemen A. Vanoyan and Yu. Tepanosyan.
- To conduct a comprehensive and impartial investigation of instances of violence committed from 17 July to 5 August 2016 in rally venues, police departments and in other locations against rally participants, media representatives and citizens who are not rally participants and of unlawful orders and other excessive actions and to bring all culprits to justice in line with law.