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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE OSCE

**Statement**

**By Ambassador Armen Papikyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia  
as delivered at the 1288th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
on the International day to end impunity for crimes against journalists  
*November 06, 2020***

Madame Chairperson,

I would like to thank the delegation of Germany on behalf of the European Union for raising this current issue. In the absence of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media which had a paralyzing effect on the work of the office, raising the issue of impunity for crimes against journalists is even more pertinent.

The International day to end impunity for crimes against journalists is also an extremely important occasion to commend and highlight the work of journalists around the world and more specifically, in the OSCE area, their dedication and tireless efforts to protect and ensure the right to seek, receive, and impart truthful information, which is indispensable for democracy and is an essential condition for the exercise of freedom of expression. The positive obligation of states to guarantee the safety of journalists and to fight against impunity for the crimes committed against journalists is among commitments of the OSCE participating States. In line with the OSCE Milan Ministerial Decision on Safety of Journalism, we should take proper measures for protection of journalists, including in conflict situations.

We believe that independent and free media can play a positive role in times of conflict through providing objective information, advocating peace, confidence and reconciliation. Seizing this opportunity, I would like to once again commend the courage of journalists and media professionals, who work in difficult environment and in hot spots, including in Stepanakert and other cities of Artsakh, trying to document and report on the crimes against humanity and war crimes that on a daily basis are being committed by Azerbaijan, with the direct involvement of Turkey, foreign terrorist fighters and jihadist groups.

In our previous statements we have mentioned how several journalists from France 24, Le Monde, Russian and local media were deliberately targeted by the Azerbaijani

armed forces and wounded, some of them severely. Russian journalist Yuri Kotenok was wounded while reporting about the first strike on the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi some hours before. He was caught by the second shelling. Fortunately, in all above cases Armenian doctors were able to save the lives of journalists. We also commend the dedication of journalists who stayed in Stepanakert and other places in Artsakh in the conditions of almost constant shelling. Thanks to them the world has seen the destruction and sufferings caused by Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression against the Artsakh.

Apart from physical persecution, journalists reporting from the Nagorno Karabakh are subjected to legal persecution and so-called blacklisting as well. Arrest warrants are being released for all those who reveal the war crimes of Azerbaijan. The latest is the criminal case against Russian war reporter and blogger Semyon Pegov launched by the Office of the Azerbaijani General Prosecutor. It bears a resemblance to the case of blogger Alexander Lapshin who was subjected to arbitrary arrest and extradition to Azerbaijan where he hardly survived brutal torture and degrading treatment in prison.

Madame Chairperson,

More than 13 years have passed since the assassination of prominent Turkish-Armenian intellectual, journalist, editor-in-chief of Agos and columnist Hrant Dink. He was assassinated in Istanbul, not far from the office of his newspaper. This was a clear manifestation of public execution of a journalist for his professional activities. Since then, we have heard different comments and justifications from the Turkish authorities regarding the delayed investigation. There were people detained and indicted. However, it is undeniable that 13 years later, the masterminds of this heinous crime still enjoy impunity.

Impunity for crimes against journalists is an attack against our democratic values and right of everyone to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, including those which may even shock, offend and disturb.

We also remember cases of crimes committed against investigative journalists whose efforts led to revelation of corruption schemes among ruling elites of some countries.

I thank you