



The statement of the Human Rights Defender on the atmosphere of intolerance in the public environment



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The studies of the Human Rights Defender's Office prove that the polarization of the public on various basis recently reached an extreme level, as a result of which intolerance, hate speech, insults, violence, the latter's preachment and calls became widespread in the public environment.

Tolerance is a cornerstone in building a democratic society free from violence and discrimination. Meanwhile, public polarization undermines the values underlying the legal and democratic state.

Free public debate on any issue is one of the key achievements of a democratic society. At the same time, every discussion should take place within the permitted framework of the right to freedom of expression, in the atmosphere of respect and solidarity for the rights and freedoms of other people.

The Human Rights Defender notes that any manifestation of hate speech, calls to violence, insults, degrading treatment, regardless of who it is spread by or to whom it is addressed, is unacceptable and poses a serious threat to the entire system of human rights protection, therefore it should be excluded from public speech and the domain of public relations.

The mission of the Human Rights Defender is to monitor the maintenance of human rights and freedoms by state and local self-government bodies and officials. The Defender's mandate is not directly related to the regulation of relations between state bodies, officials, if the issue does not require the need to protect a concrete individual right. At the same time, the public speech of officials, their relationships and existing issues in this regard have a significant impact on the general system of the human rights protection. From this point of view, the legitimacy of speech and behavior in the Parliament is especially important, as a main platform for discussions on issues of public interest. Therefore, it is essential that the relations between state bodies, officials, the methodology chosen for political and other public activities comply with the above-mentioned standards of legitimacy. Any political debate or discussion should take place in an atmosphere of solidarity and respect, excluding inappropriate speech, including insults, degrading treatment, hate speech and preachment of violence.

Every person holding a public position and public servant has a direct duty to observe the rules of conduct, exclude and mitigate public polarization, violence, hate speech, direct or indirect justification or encouragement of illegal phenomena, including violence. Furthermore, it is important for officials to use their public platform to counter unlawful manifestation of speech and behavior, including expressions and misinformation targeting various groups of society. From the point of view of creating a proper system of human rights protection, it is essential that other famous persons, public and political figures take this fact into consideration.

The Human Rights Defender particularly emphasizes that the culture of political and public debate in our society needs to be transformed, which is a priority issue in the way of guaranteeing public tolerance, solidarity and the rule of law.

OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER OF ARMENIA