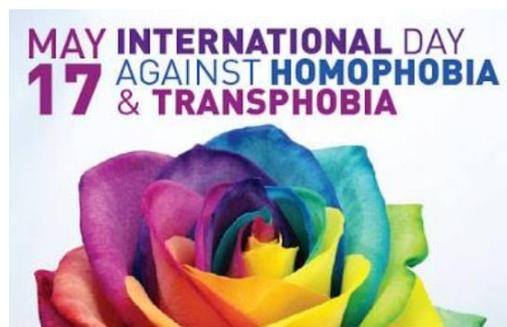




#IDAHOT 2016

**“INITIATIVES FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGES FOR
PROTECTION OF RIGHTS OF LGBTI PEOPLE IN ARMENIA”**

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT



June 2016
Yerevan, Armenia



CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

On the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, May 17th, 2016 "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO organized "Initiatives of legislative changes for protection of rights of LGBTI people in Armenia" conference which aimed at raising the level of public awareness on the necessity of those legislative changes that contribute to the development of protection mechanisms of rights of LGBTI people and their integration into the society.

The conference was organized in the scope of "Reinforcement of legislative mechanisms regarding protection of rights of vulnerable groups for rule of law" project funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Tbilisi, Georgia.

PARTICIPANTS: SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS

The opening remark was delivered by Sergey Gabrielyan, President of "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO.

Greeting speeches were delivered by Floor Nuiten-Elzinga, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia; Judith Farnworth, the UK's Ambassador to Armenia; Matthias Kiesler, German Ambassador to Armenia and Larisa Minasyan, Executive director of Open Society Foundations – Armenia.

At the first session "Needs of sex reassignment surgery of transgender people: assessment of legal barriers", "Legal regulations of sex-change surgeries" and "Military service of GBT / MSM people in the Armed Forces of RA" reports were presented. At the second session speeches were delivered by Izabella Sargsyan /Eurasia Partnership Foundation – Armenia/; Hayk Abrahamyan /Open Society Foundations – Armenia/ and Anahit Simonyan /Anti-discrimination Coalition/.

The conference was also attended by Jean-Francois Charpentier, Ambassador of the French Republic in Armenia, representatives from the US Embassy in Armenia, Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, Chamber of Advocates of Armenia, Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia, human rights defender organizations and Military Registration And Enlistment Office Of The Republic Of Armenia.

Representatives of Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health and National Assembly did not participate in the conference.

Totally 40 participants attended the conference.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In the opening remark S. Gabrielyan greatly thanked all the guests and other stakeholders and mentioned that the NGO highly appreciates the adopted policy of the European countries and the United States in the establishment of democratic values and mechanisms of human rights protection of LGBTI people in Armenia. Referring to achievements and experience of international cooperation of the NGO in the field of protection of rights of LGBTI people, the NGO President emphasized the importance of collaboration with Armenian authorities. "The International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia" aims to identify and raise issues of protection of rights and assurance of equality of LGBTI people worldwide. We, human

rights defenders, express our solidarity to LGBTI people in Armenia and our commitment to more comprehensive cooperation with all the interested parties”,- concluded his speech S. Gabrielyan.

The representatives of international diplomatic institutions highlighted the importance of the day in terms of development and enforcement of mechanisms to protect the rights of LGBTI people and establishment of equality as well as referred policies to protect LGBTI rights in European countries and Armenia. The promotion of rights of LGBTI people and equality, the encouragement of decent life and respectful treatment are prioritized by foreign diplomatic agencies in Armenia, thus the speakers expressed willingness to share their experience and practice with other countries preparing anti-discrimination legislation – including Armenia, and their intention to promote equality and tolerance both nationally and internationally.

At the first session the following findings were discussed with the representatives of diplomatic, international, state and non-profit institutions and organizations: needs of sex reassignment surgeries; obstacles of their satisfaction, their consequences, preferable ways of addressing the systemic problems of the transgender community. A number of suggestions for legal regulations of sex-change surgeries were also presented, such as investment of legal norms, conditions for implementation of sex-change surgeries, possibilities to make changes in documents of transgender people, legal regulations of surgeries undergone abroad, legal settlements of confidentiality, as well as issues of military service of GBT / MSM people.

At the second session the speakers talked about the means of prevention of discrimination by non-state actors in Armenia, as well as referred to the achievements and problems of non-governmental organizations in the process of eliminating all kinds of discrimination.

FEEDBACK: INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC INSTITUTIONS

The participant ambassadors and heads of missions shared their opinions about the conference on the embassies' Facebook pages.



Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia Floor Nuiten-Elzinga: "Twenty years ago a friend of mine told his father that he was homosexual. Father's first question was - what can you do to correct it?" This is how our Deputy Ambassador Floor started her welcoming remarks at the conference Rights of LGBTI persons in Yerevan. It was organised by our Armenian partner organisation "New Generation Humanitarian NGO" right on the IDAHOT, on 17 May. And all ended up well for Floor's friend as his father accepted him the way he is.



Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Armenia Judith Farnworth:

To mark IDAHOT 2016, HM Ambassador Judith Farnworth hosted a lunch for representatives of Armenian LGBTI organizations to discuss LGBT equality and to learn about their work.

The Ambassador then gave an opening speech at a conference organized by the "New Generation" NGO to discuss legislative changes for the protection of the rights of LGBT people.

In her speech the Ambassador noted that "The UK Government is committed to non-discrimination on any grounds, including sexual orientation and gender identity. We are committed to promoting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. This isn't about special rights - it is merely about LGBT people being accorded the same dignity, respect and rights as all other citizens. Human rights are universal and should apply equally to all people.

The UK has one of the world's strongest legislative frameworks to prevent discrimination and we are ready to share our experience and practice with other countries preparing anti-discrimination legislation - including Armenia.

The strongest, safest and most prosperous societies are those in which citizens can live freely and without fear of violence or discrimination and where ALL citizens can play a full and active role in society. That is why the UK government, including my own ministry the FCO, is intent on continuing its efforts nationally and internationally to promote equality and tolerance."



Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Armenia Matthias Kiesler:

In his welcoming remarks the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Armenia Matthias Kiesler urged the participant organizations of the conference not to weaken their LGBTI people human rights protection efforts in Armenia bringing the example of Germany, which has a long history of promoting a number of aimed at protecting LGBTI people from discrimination and stigma.

THE MASS MEDIA ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



On May 17 on the Facebook page of the LGBTnews.am website [a short review](#) was published about the conference where the main issues were listed, particularly the process of drafting the anti-discrimination law and discriminatory practices in the military service.



On May 18 Epress.am website published **"LGBT+ people don't face any issues in the Armed Forces but they are considered mentally disordered"** article, where a number of issues discussed at the conference were interpreted. For example, teachers in Armenia display a differentiated approach to boys and girls, belonging to the LGBT community is considered immoral, a negative attitude is displayed towards LGBT people in state and other structures, LGBT people are treated as mentally disordered people in the Ministry of Defense, and the Army displays an extremely negative attitude toward LGBT people.



NEGATIVE INFORMATION / DISINFORMATION ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Critical and negative articles about the conference were also published, which were carefully studied from May 18 to May 25, 2016.



On May 17 Lurer.com-ը published **"A number of sectarians began to flee the country in the current semi-war situation"** article, where the author, Artur Hovhannisyan, referred to the RA Law on "Alternative Military Service". Calling LGBTI people " degenerative " he particularly mentioned: "...Some participants of the event enlarged the scope of the event regarding protection of rights of LGBTI people and talked about so called necessity of protection of rights of broader groups. It appears, that "human rights" according to the concept and definition developed by the West, is called to degenerate, destruct and enslave the states and societies, as well as to reduce their protection, to create divisiveness between minority and majority groups, to weaken them, and, anyway, serves that purpose. Are such kind of "human rights" acceptable? ... Of course not." The article was republished on mediamall.am and lrahos.com, as well as on the [Facebook page](#) of Lurer.com, where threats and hate speeches were spread by the users. The mentioned article on source and reprinted websites and on the Facebook page of Lurer.com totally had 4629 views, 320 likes and 12 comments.



On May 18 "Armenian World" published **"They take the chance"** article where the conference was given the following comment: "We believe that the time selection was not random. Taking into consideration the fact that the attention of the social and political sectors is focused on the Nagorno-Karabakh issues, the local LGBT representatives with the support of defenders of "western values" want to realize their ancient dream".



This article was reprinted by armlur.am, hrarak.am, lurer.am, orer.am, nyut.am, pastinfo.am, tert.am, lin.am, yerevannews.am, armarlur.com, Pan-Armenian Parental Committee shared the article published on pastinfo.am on its Facebook page. The mentioned article on the source, reprinted and Pan-Armenian Parental Committee's Facebook page totally had about 2211 views, 62 likes, and 1 comment.

On May 18 Artur Hovhannisyan published ["The participation of Arpine Hovhannisyan was also intended in the conference dedicated to the protection of rights of perverts"](#) article on lurer.com, where it is particularly noted: " Journalists were not invited to the event, and I think, not coincidentally or in the result of forgetfulness. I have all the bases to think that they were either embarrassed to invite them, because the conference was about protection of so-called rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transvestite people, in other words perverts, or they have feared because they imagined very well the expected publications. Let me emphasize that the organizers, who advocate impermissible rights of perverts, were enjoying the support of the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia Floor Nuiten-Elzinga, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Armenia Matthias Kiesler and the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Armenia Judith Farnworth. If I were the President of Armenia or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I would declare them "Persona non Grata". The article was reprinted on Irahos.com and mediamall.am, and shared on the Facebook page of the Pan-Armenian Parental Committee. According to our survey, this article totally had 5816 views, 349 likes, 1 share, and 15 comments.

On May 19 the "Armenian World" published ["How is explained the unexpected activation of the LGBT community"](#) article, where the author, S. Araqelyan, presented some facts that don't match the goals of the Organization. For example, the organizers were planning to transfer the developed legislative initiatives to the Ministry of Justice, and the absence of the Minister and



Deputy Minister failed their plans; the organizations selected the implementation period when Armenia faces political and economic an serious challenges, and the attention of the society is focused on the Nagorno-Karabakh and the situation on the borders. This article was reprinted on blognews.am, iravunk.com, andradardz.am, orer.am, tert.am, shabat.am, pastinfo.am. [This article](#) was published on armarlur.com, which was reprinted by infoleader.am and shared on its Facebook page. The article totally had 18 shares and about 35 likes.



The "Armenian World" held interviews with [Arman Boshyan](#), the president of Pan-Armenian Parental Committee and [Ruzanna Muradyan](#), RPA parliamentary group member.



On May 19 Facebook user Krist Manaryan posted a [status](#) on his page with the following content: "While our sons go to fight against the Turks, to die and to miraculously save our country, the sexual minorities organize LGBT conferences in the face of new generation ngo at Ani Plaza hotel and even invite the human rights defender and ministry of justice.... though in their honor they did not show up at the conference. But who those homosexuals are to get this relaxed in our country that is at war Maybe because no bar was fire bombed. All those new generations should be trampled under feet, since they are growing like weeds due to our tolerance and try to distort the noble face of this nation. It is time to get back to you. You were thrown away from our attention, third-type puppies".



The status was published by openblog.am, henaran.am, asekose.am, blog.1in.am, blognews.am, yelaket.am, boombest.ru, magnis.news and correspondingly shared it on their Facebook pages, and Pan-Armenian Parental Committee shared the article published on blog.1in.am on its Facebook page. Cording to our survey from May 19 to May 25, 2016 the status totally had about 26,390 views, 4464 likes, 300 shares and 235 comments.

NEW WAVE OF HOMOPHOBIA



On the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia May 17 2016 after the conference "Initiatives of legislative changes for protection of rights of LGBTI people in Armenia" organized by "New Generation" Humanitarian NGO and other events organized by other organizations, stop-g7.com website was created on the Internet which spreads threats and hate speech towards LGBTI people in Armenia. Its articles are shared by particular people on different Facebook pages. The website is bilingual: Armenian and Russian. They have published ["The US Embassy in Armenia propagands homosexuality"](#), ["The operation of perverts and their supporters in Armenia"](#), ["The participation of the ambassadors of the Great Britain and Germany in the closed event of perverts"](#) and ["Defender of perverts Lara Aharonyan, President of "Women's Resource Center"](#) in Armenian and Russian, which weren't commented on the website but on the Facebook pages of stop-g7.com and Pan-Armenian Parental Committee had about 366 likes, 212 shares and 143 comments.



On May 28 the "Armenian World" published ["Only with the help of the society's resistance it would be possible to prevent the legalization of degeneration in Armenia"](#) interview with founder-member of "The restoration of sovereignty" initiative Hayk Ayzvayan, which was reprinted on <http://armsovereignty.com/>, shared on the Facebook page of the Pan-Armenian Parental Committee and had about 32 likes, 3 shares and 2 comments.

In response LGBTnews.am published ["A false wave of homophobia or why are noising the marginal"](#) article, where the author tried to determine the reasons of the above-mentioned publications.



**«ՆՈՐ ՍԵՐՈՆԵՂ» «NEW GENERATION»
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