

## **State Reply**

Alert 30/2021

“Protesters Attack RFE/RL Journalists Artak Khulyan and Karen Chilingaryan in Yerevan”

With reference to the Alert 30/2021 dated 26 February 2021, concerning the case of correspondent Artak Khulyan and cameraman Karen Chilingaryan of the “Azatutyun” radio station, who were harassed and assaulted while covering an opposition rally in Yerevan (particularly, several participants of the rally kicked the journalists and shouted abuse at them until the Police intervened, moreover the protesters damaged the crew’s video camera), the Police and the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia have taken significant steps to establish safe and secure working conditions for the journalists in Armenia thus rejecting any impunity for crimes committed against the media.

More specifically, on 23 February, 2021, during the rally organized by the opposition at the intersection of Tumanyan-Sayat-Nova and Tumanyan-Abovyan streets in Yerevan, an unidentified group of people obstructed the legal professional activities of the correspondent and cameraman of the “Azatutyun” radio station. Thus, on 3 March, 2021, according to the Part 1 of the Article 164<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, which stipulates, that “the hindrance to the legal professional activities of a journalist, or forcing the journalist to disseminate information or not to disseminate information, is punished with a fine in the amount of 50-150 minimal salaries, or correctional labor for up to 1 year,” the criminal case N13187921 was initiated and was accepted for proceedings at the Division of Investigation of Grave Crimes of the Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia. On 26 February, 2021, the case was sent to the Investigative Division of Kentron and Norq-Marash administrative districts of Yerevan of the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia for the preliminary investigation.

All the appropriate measures envisaged by the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia<sup>2</sup> have been taken by the preliminary investigative body for a comprehensive and objective investigation of the circumstances of the above-mentioned criminal case. In particular, the video materials were scrutinized, the investigative body was also instructed to take operative-investigative measures, in parallel a letter was sent to the Yerevan office of the “Azat Europe (Free Europe)/Azatutyun (Liberty)” radio station to obtain the relevant data on the journalists who were subject to attacks as well as to carry out the necessary investigative actions with their direct participation and to grant a procedural status. At the current stage of the investigation there is no person identified as a victim, suspect or as an accused. It should also be noted that the journalists had bruises but were not seriously injured and did not need any medical assistance.

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<sup>1</sup>The Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia;  
<http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1349&lang=eng>

<sup>2</sup>The Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia;  
[http://parliament.am/law\\_docs/010998HO248eng.pdf?lang=eng](http://parliament.am/law_docs/010998HO248eng.pdf?lang=eng)