

## **Statement by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance about recent events in Armenia, involving leading political figures openly condoning homophobic violence**

Armenian version

Strasbourg, 7.6.2012 - The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe wishes to express concern about recent events in Armenia, involving leading political figures openly condoning homophobic violence.

Setting a club on fire was characterised by a high-ranking State official as a rebellion against homosexuals, which was completely right and justified. And one of the persons arrested by the police in connection with the attack was bailed out by two members of parliament, who appeared to provide support for the alleged perpetrators in, inter alia, declarations made to the press.

ECRI draws attention to the destructive consequences that such statements - and the various manifestations of hatred they have encouraged - are likely to have for the peaceful and tolerant society it has always tried to foster in Armenia and all other Council of Europe member States.

In ECRI's view, events of this nature create a dangerous sense of impunity which undermines, in a fundamental manner, overall respect for human rights. ECRI, therefore, calls on the Armenian authorities to investigate fully the underlying criminal acts with a view to establishing, inter alia, the motives of the alleged perpetrators. It also calls urgently on all Armenian political parties to distance themselves from such extreme forms of expression, which are clearly incompatible with the values that ECRI has always promoted.

*ECRI is a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors problems of racism, discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language, as well as xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance, prepares reports and issues recommendations to member states. For more information on ECRI: [www.coe.int/ecri](http://www.coe.int/ecri)*

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