#ELECTRICYEREVAN

Crackdown on Peaceful Protest in Armenia

July 2015

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Summary

This report summarizes the findings of a fact-finding mission to Yerevan, Armenia, organized by International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) within the framework of the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) on 24-29 June 2015. The purpose of the mission was to document and investigate allegations of human rights violations surrounding the forcible dispersal by police of the protest dubbed “Electric Yerevan” on 23 June 2015.

Following days of protests in Yerevan and other Armenian cities against plans to increase electricity prices, police moved to break up a peaceful demonstration held at Marshal Baghramyan Avenue in the capital in the morning of 23 June 2015. As documented by the CSP fact-finding mission, after giving protesters less than 10 warning of the pending dispersal, police used water cannon against the protesters, turning up the pressure to the point where people were knocked off their feet and left with injuries to their eyes, ears and other parts of their bodies. Over 200 people were detained and many of them were allegedly chased, hit, beaten, kicked and/or put in chokehold by police. Testimonies obtained by the CSP fact-finding mission, as well as available video footage show that plainclothes police officers took an active part in the detention and ill-treatment of protesters. These officers wore only “police” armbands, which they often put on or unveiled only shortly before the dispersal of the protest started. The CSP mission also documented a number of cases where police targeted journalists who covered the protest, detaining and physically assaulting them and confiscating, damaging or destroying their equipment, thereby obstructing them from carrying out their work. In some cases, the ill-treatment of apprehended individuals allegedly continued in police cars as detainees were being taken to different police stations in the capital and neighbouring towns. In other cases, senior police officers present allegedly failed to intervene to stop police abuse, or allegedly instructed lower-level officers to treat journalists harshly. The CSP mission was able to confirm that dozens of people sustained injuries as a result of the use of water cannon and the heavy-handed tactics of police.

The CSP fact-finding mission also documented concerns with respect to the access to legal safeguards of individuals who were detained by police. Apprehended individuals were often not properly informed about the grounds for their detention or their status and rights. In many cases, they were treated as suspects and searched, fingerprinted and/or sent for alcohol and drug tests, although they were supposedly held as witnesses. Detainees were also not always granted prompt access to a lawyer and in some cases police allegedly obstructed access to legal assistance, e.g. by preventing lawyers from seeing their clients for a long time. The CSP delegation recorded several cases when individuals were threatened with repercussions – including by being criminally charged – unless they agreed to take blood tests or comply with other requests made by police. The mission members also received reports about a number of cases where authorities failed to ensure prompt access to medical assistance and adequate treatment in detention, e.g. by leaving detainees without anything to eat for hours on end.

While some detainees were held for as many as nine hours and more, all those detained in connection with the dispersal of the demonstration were eventually released without charge by the evening of 23 June. However, the same day, the Prosecutor General’s Office announced that it had opened a criminal case on “hooliganism” in relation to the protest actions that preceded the dispersal. An investigation is currently under way. In another development, the Armenian Special Investigation Service announced on 3 July that it had initiated a criminal investigation relating to allegations that law enforcement officials exceeded their powers and obstructed the activities of journalists during the events of 23 June.
Based on an assessment of relevant provisions of national and international law, this report concludes that Armenian authorities violated the right to freedom of assembly by forcibly dispersing the peaceful protest held in Yerevan on 23 June, although it posed no clear threat to public security or the rights and freedoms of others. The CSP mission members found no evidence that some protesters threw stones at police, as reported by media with reference to police sources, without providing any details. Some interviewees said they saw a few plastic bottles flying towards the water cannon after the dispersal of the protest had started, but all demonstrators, journalists and civil society monitors with whom the CSP mission spoke described the protest as inherently peaceful in nature, as also corroborated by available video footage. In the event that isolated participants would in fact have thrown some objects at police, any police intervention should have been aimed at dealing with those particular individuals rather than dispersing the whole event. Moreover, even if the authorities did not receive formal notice of the protest actions on 22-23 June and these continued for a longer period than that foreseen for spontaneous assemblies under national law, these circumstances did not in themselves justify forcibly dispersing the event.

The report also finds that police acted in violation of international human rights standards on 23 June by using disproportionate and excessive force to break up the protest as well as ill-treatment against protesters and journalists, as evidenced by the numerous injuries sustained by victims. The information presented in the report raises serious questions regarding the nature of the detentions that were carried out and suggests that many protesters were arbitrarily detained and that their rights as detainees were violated.

### Methodology

A team of five monitors \(^1\) deployed by International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium) within the framework of the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) conducted a fact-finding mission to Yerevan on 24-29 June 2015. The mission was deployed to study allegations of the use of disproportionate and excessive force, arbitrary detentions, abusive treatment of demonstrators and journalists and other human rights violations in relation to the dispersal of the peaceful protest against rising electricity prices held in Yerevan on 23 June.

The monitors interviewed and took testimonies from victims, witnesses, lawyers, journalists and NGO leaders who were personally affected by the dispersal or observed the 23 June 2015 events. We wish to thank all those who agreed to meet the CSP delegation and share their observations, analyses, photos and video-recordings with them. Upon the request of some of our sources, we did not use their real names for security reasons.

This report presents information obtained during the fact-finding mission and provides a legal assessment of the 23 June events. IPHR also studied video footage of different media outlets to reconstruct the timeline of events leading up to and during the dispersal on 23 June and to verify reports of injuries sustained by water cannon and police ill-treatment.\(^2\)
Overview of events

Protests sparked by electricity price hike

On 17 June 2015, the Public Services Regulatory Commission of the Republic of Armenia decided to raise electricity prices by around 16% as of 1 August 2015, following a request of the Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA) that operate the power grid in Armenia. The company, which is fully owned by the Russian Inter-RAO company whose chairman Igor Sechin is a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, has a monopoly on distribution. ENA justified the price hike with the fall in the value of the national currency and the necessity to pay back debts. There are allegations that ENA mismanaged funds and lavishly spent on homes and luxury cars for the company’s executives. This was the third price hike since 2013.

In the following days, peaceful protests took place in different parts of Armenia against the price hike. At the centre of the protests were socio-economic concerns about rising electricity bills. Some protesters were also motivated by allegations of corruption and lack of accountability within the Armenian government and criticism of the ownership of key Armenian infrastructure by Russian oligarchs, which stem from Armenia’s close foreign policy ties with Russia.

Thousands of people gathered in Yerevan’s Liberty Square on 19 June 2015. Photo: Serouj Aprahamian
19 to 22 June: Peaceful protest on Freedom Square and march on Marshal Baghramyan Avenue

In the evening of 19 June, several hundred people joined a demonstration initiated by the civic initiative “No to Plunder” near the Opera on the central Freedom Square in Yerevan. The group had notified the authorities of the demonstration in advance, as required under national law. Protesters then spontaneously decided to carry out a sit-in until 22 June and called on the authorities to respond to their grievances regarding the electricity costs. Not having had a response by the evening of 22 June, four to five thousand demonstrators, most of whom were young people, began marching towards the Presidential Palace on Marshal Baghramyan Avenue, one of the city’s main thoroughfares, at around 19:00. The demonstrators were singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, shouting and displaying posters with slogans such as “We won’t pay”, “No to Plunder” and “We’re the owners of our country, we’re Armenia”. They were stopped by a police blockade consisting of several rows of police, many of them special police equipped with helmets, shields and truncheons. A water cannon and two armoured personnel carriers were stationed behind the police cordon. The protesters continued their peaceful protest in front of the police blockade, some 700 metres away from the Presidential Palace. They turned down a proposal submitted to them by Valery Osipyan, the Deputy Chief of Yerevan Police, for a small group of them to meet with the President. Some protesters collected signatures from residents at Marshal Baghramyan Avenue confirming that they had no objections to the sit-in and noise in front of their houses.

“When the water cannon was turned on, people stayed in their places and some even took off their shirts, joking that they hadn’t washed for a while. They didn’t take the situation seriously. Then police went on the offensive. The pressure of the jets increased significantly and threw people two metres through the air when it hit them.”

Narek Aleksanyan, a photographer of the Internet news site Hetq.am

Sit-in in front of the police blockade on Baghramyan Avenue, 22 June 2015
23 June: Dispersal of peaceful protest and detention of protesters and journalists

At around 4:00-5:00 on 23 June, there was a significant increase in police forces. Shortly before 5:00, Radio Liberty reported that some demonstrators declared that they were committed to a peaceful protest and urged their fellow-protesters not to get provoked by police and not to take any actions against them. As confirmed by footage of 1-in.am and Radio Liberty, at around 5:12 on 23 June, Deputy Chief of Yerevan Police Valery Osipyan addressed the protesters – an estimated 300-600 people remained present -- by loudspeaker. He stated that “the police demand to stop the illegal actions immediately and move to Freedom Square or another square of your choice, which is not a main traffic route”. He continued: “(...) you are violating the general provisions of the law on assemblies. Immediately stop your illegal actions. Otherwise the police, in accordance with the law, will use force and ‘special means’.” Five minutes later, he repeated a similar message, adding and repeating twice that demonstrators had ten minutes to clear the spot, or else, police would disperse them. Many protesters whistled and booed him out.

Right after this, Valery Osipyan turned to the journalists present and urged them to clear the corridor between the police and the demonstrators.

Several protesters told the CSP monitors that around the time of Valery Osipyan’s announcements, many police officers in plainclothes lined up on both sides of the protest. Up until then they had been standing among the demonstrators without any official signs identifying them as police. Some sources reported recognizing individual officers working in district police stations in different parts of Yerevan. Several eyewitnesses told CSP monitors that they saw plainclothes officers putting on police armbands shortly before the dispersal began or rolling up their sleeves so that these armbands became visible. The water cannon was moved towards the demonstrators and special police forces made noise by beating on their shields.

A riot police vehicle sprays jets of water to disperse the protesters, 23 June 2015
At around 5:20, not having waited for ten minutes, as mentioned in the second loudspeaker announcement, police started using water cannon by directing two water jets towards the centre of the protest’s front rows. While the water pressure initially was not so strong, several protesters reported that police significantly upped the pressure to the point that the jets hit the protesters severely (for further information, refer to the section “Individuals injured by jets of water cannon” below).  

Police in uniforms and in plainclothes, mostly with “police” armbands, but not in all cases, started detaining demonstrators and took them to police vehicles parked nearby. The police forces and the water cannon, which was being moved forward, were chasing the demonstrators towards Freedom Square, where officers in uniform and in plainclothes with “police” armbands detained many of them. Police also ran after demonstrators, who were trying to escape into streets to the left and right of Marshal Baghramyan Avenue, to detain them. In many cases police hit, beat and kicked demonstrators while detaining them, often using truncheons and shields (for further information, see chapter “Allegations of police ill-treatment during and after apprehension” below). According to police sources, a total of 237 people were detained.

The detained demonstrators, journalists and civic activists were taken to police stations in different districts of Yerevan and in the neighbouring towns of Armavir and Ashtarak. By the evening, all had been released.

Also on 23 June, the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Armenia issued a statement informing the public that a criminal case on “hooliganism” (Article 258, part 1 of the Criminal Code of Armenia) had been initiated the previous day and sent to the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia (ICRA) for preliminary investigation. According to the statement, a group of people disturbed public order by conducting an illegal assembly, a march and a sit-in on Marshal Baghramyan Avenue from 19:30 on 22 June into the night of 22-23 June.

“*When the dispersal started those people who had been standing there all night pretending to be protesters, suddenly and simultaneously started to push and pull the journalists in order to get to the protesters.*”

*Sisak Gabrielyan* of Radio Liberty
The days after the dispersal

By the evening of 23 June, protesters reassembled on Freedom Square in even larger numbers than before, to protest against the rough police response, in addition to the planned rise of electricity costs. Police blocked off Marshal Baghramyan Avenue with rows of police, special vehicles and a water cannon. The protesters erected barricades of garbage containers to shield themselves from potential attacks and continued their peaceful sit-in. Similar demonstrations took place in other cities and towns in Armenia, such as Abovyan, Ashtarak, Charentsavan and the second largest Armenian city, Gyumri.

According to an official press release issued on 26 June on the occasion of the Armenia visit of Maksim Sokolov, the Transportation Minister of the Russian Federation and Co-Chairman of the Armenian-Russian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Maksim Sokolov had agreed that an audit would be conducted of the Russian-owned ENA company. Serzh Sargsyan stated that the audit should be conducted “with the participation of experts and civil society”. On 27 June, President Serzh Sargsyan announced that the increase in electricity prices would not be passed on to consumers pending the results of the audit and that the government would cover any additional costs in the meantime. While the group “No to Plunder” and some other protesters accepted this offer and moved back to Freedom Square, most protesters continued the sit-in, demanding that the price rise should be annulled.
The journalist Tigran Hakobyan and activists Marina-Mishel Boyajyan and Shoghakat Vardanyan have reported being summoned for further questioning as witnesses in the criminal case of “hooliganism” instigated on 22 June (further information about their cases can be found below).

Use of force on 23 June

“What they put on display – several rows of police, police vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, water cannon – promised us a dispersal. Like in a Chekhov story: if there is a gun, there will be a shot.” A demonstration participant, who wishes to remain anonymous

“Police officers without uniforms worked on the left and right [of the protest] and they were beating people brutally.” Activist Michael Nazaryan

“I also want to clearly express my position to those people, those forces that are ready to provoke and exacerbate the situation for their short-term interests and undermine our trust, who are ready to make a battlefield out of peaceful gatherings for their desire to become a battle commander for just one hour […].”

“[L]aw enforcement officers have acted and will act strictly and severely against such people.” President Serzh Sargsyan in a press statement issued on 27 June 2015

The CSP delegation was able to confirm that dozens of people sustained injuries as a result of the use of water cannon by police to disperse the peaceful demonstration and of police ill-treatment during and after the apprehension of individuals.

Citing the Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Health, the news agency Armenpress reported on 23 June 2015 that ambulances took 25 people to medical centres and a hospital in Yerevan to treat injuries sustained during the dispersal of the protest. In addition, medical centres and hospitals treated victims who were not delivered by ambulance and not all who required medical treatment turned to medical centres or hospitals.

This chapter features accounts of victims and eyewitnesses and details injuries sustained during the dispersal of the demonstration. It also provides evidence of how police targeted journalists who were covering the events.

On 26 June, CSP monitors visited the emergency room of the Medical Centre of St. Gregory the Enlightened in the northern Nor Nork district of Yerevan. Senior medical staff told the delegates that a total of 15 men and women were admitted to the hospital on 23 June, requiring medical treatment following the dispersal of the demonstration. Protesters told medical personnel that they had sustained injuries as a result of being hit by water cannon jets and being subjected to police beatings, including with truncheons. The youngest patient was 17 years old. Injuries recorded by medical personnel included contusions, bruises and abrasions of different parts of the body including the eye, head, shoulder, arms, chest, back and knees.

Demonstrators, journalists and civic activists interviewed by CSP monitors reported that the following police forces were involved in dispersing the 23 June protest: the Criminal Search Department, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Public Order Department, the Department of Road Inspection, the so-called “Angels” (a public order protection unit), officers of the special police and police in plainclothes. However, the CSP delegation was not able to confirm the information.
The officers in plainclothes wore only police armbands during the dispersal, but no further means/signs of identification. Beatings and other ill-treatment were carried out by officers in plainclothes and by uniformed officers.

Several protesters reported that they are able to identify the policemen who subjected them to ill-treatment. In some cases, protesters gave the CSP delegation photos or video footage showing the alleged perpetrators.

Citing police sources, several media outlets reported on 23 June that protesters had thrown stones at police and that 11 police officers were injured. The Police of the Republic of Armenia did not issue any press statement on this topic. According to the “Armenian Times” daily, police named neither the policemen, who were allegedly injured, nor the type of their injuries. All demonstrators, journalists and observers the CSP delegation spoke to described the protest as peaceful. Some interviewees reported that they saw some plastic water bottles flying towards the water cannon and video footage by Lragir.am shows one man throwing bottles towards the water cannon as it was being fired at protesters.¹³

**Individuals injured by water cannon jets**

Demonstrators, civic activists and journalists interviewed by the CSP delegation reported a range of injuries sustained by protest participants as a result of the use of water cannon. Several sustained injuries to eyes and ears; many were thrown to the ground by the jets’ force and contracted injuries to various parts of their bodies. Some told the delegation of breathing problems and temporary loss of consciousness. Below are case descriptions based on interviews conducted during the CSP’s mission. Some people whose reports are included in this section were also subjected to ill-treatment by police and/or reported concerns about their treatment in police detention. Their reports on those issues can be found in the relevant sections of this document below.

An activist, whom a CSP delegate interviewed on condition of anonymity, recalled that police continued to chase protesters with water cannon when they were already overpowered: "We tried to run. Other people helped me, I found it hard to move. We kept falling from the continuing jets of water. It made no practical sense to continue shooting water, people were already exhausted. But they continued firing jets up to the junction of Moskovyan Street and Baghramyan Avenue. That was unjustifiably cruel.”

A protester is thrown off by the jet of water coming from riot police vehicle, 23 June 2015. Photo Narek Aleksanyan I hetq.am
Activist Astghik Aghekyan told the CSP monitors on 25 June that, when she saw the water cannon moving closer she ran towards Marina-Michel Boyajyan, her daughter, who was standing in one of the protest’s front rows. Astghik Aghekyan recalled: “When the water cannon was turned on, I tried to hold my daughter but the jet was so strong, it threw her away three metres. Then I tried to help my daughter’s friend [Meri Hamzyan]. The jet hit her on the ear and she fell down on three other people.” Marina-Michel Boyajyan, aged 17, told a CSP delegate that the “water cannon firmly hit me on the neck twice [...] The third jet hit me with such force that I fell over into the crowd. I lost consciousness and when I regained it, I saw police beating people with truncheons.” Marina-Michel reported that for several days after the forcible dispersal she was in pain due to injuries to her neck and back, resulting from being hit by the water jets and subsequent police beatings. Meri Hamzyan, aged 18, was in the front rows of the protest as the water cannon was turned on. She told a CSP delegate on 27 June: “First the water jets didn’t reach me, but then the water hit me squarely on the back. I wanted to move away, but the jet hit my ear. I fell down. For some time I was under shock, then I got up and wanted to leave, but the jet hit my head. The jet was so strong I literally flew and then hit the ground. When I tried to get up, the jet hit my back and pushed me to the ground again.” She recalled that Astghik Aghekyan ran up to her and tried to lead her away, but Meri was again hit by the jet on the sacrum. Eventually, she managed to run away. She told a CSP delegate on 25 June that her ear still hurt and she showed several bruises on her body which she said she sustained from the repeated falls and being hit with a truncheon by police after the dispersal by water cannon.

Shoghakat Vardanyan, a piano student at Yerevan State Conservatory, was also in one of the front rows of the protest when the water cannon was turned on. She told the CSP monitors on 26 June: “I remember showing them the middle finger and screaming F* the System and at that moment the jet hit my stomach and threw me over on the asphalt, right on my hip. I tried to protect my head with my arms and stand up, but another jet hit my back and threw me on the ground again. I felt like I was dying because I couldn’t breathe. Two people helped me move to the side, one rubbed my back, but that hurt terribly. I had difficulty breathing again. I sat down on the stairs in front of a nearby bank to recover but people were running past me as police were chasing them to detain them and, with difficulty, I also moved further away from the scene.” Shoghakat Vardanyan managed to get inside a building on Cascade Alley, where some other protesters carried her upstairs to hide from the police chasing them. However, she reported that soon afterwards police entered the building, found and roughly dragged them down. “When asked how they found us, a policeman replied: ‘By the traces of water’. They put me in a police car, where I was alone with several policemen. Someone violently pushed me in the car seat. That was awfully painful”, she recalled.
Levon Barseghyan of the Journalists’ Club “Asparez” from Gyumri told the CSP delegation on 28 June that when police urged journalists to clear the corridor between the water cannon and the demonstrators he sat down in the first row of the protest. Shortly after the water cannon was switched on, he recalled, “something very strongly hit my left leg, near the knee. I think it was a piece of the water cannon, a small plastic or metal part.”

Nazaret Karoyan, the Director of the Institute for Contemporary Art in Yerevan, was among the protesters on Marshal Baghramyan Avenue in the early morning hours of 23 June. He recalled that as he was sitting “around 25 metres away from the police cordon a strong jet hit my eyes and mouth. I fell down and was unable to see. I crawled on the ground to move to the side. I found a column, held on to it, stood up and called for help. I was still unable to see anything. Somebody took my hand and led me away. Somebody poured water on my eyes to wash them. A few minutes later I was able to see again and the protest on Baghramyan Avenue had already been dispersed.” An ambulance arrived and took Nazaret Karoyan to the Medical Centre of St. Gregory the Enlightened, where he was diagnosed with bruised upper and lower eyelids.

Nazaret Karoyan, 56, was injured by water cannon and diagnosed with concussion and eye injury at the hospital 26 June 2015
Izabella Khanzratyan, a student of history at Yerevan State University, told CSP monitors on 27 June that as soon as the water cannon jets hit her, “my breath stopped. I felt pain in my head, heart and back [...] Even now I cannot breathe properly [and] I have bruises on my arms and back.” Later police detained Izabella Khanzratyan and kept her at Shengavit district police station from 7:00 to 17:00, she reported.

Allegations of police ill-treatment during and after apprehension

Ashot Aharonyan, spokesperson of the police of Armenia, told journalists on 23 June that police detained 237 people during and after the dispersal of the demonstration on 23 June. Many demonstrators, civic activists and journalists who spoke to the CSP delegation reported that they saw police ill-treating people while detaining them or that they were themselves subjected to ill-treatment. In most cases, demonstrators did not use any force to resist police officers when they were detaining them, as confirmed by the CSP delegation’s interlocutors and online video footage. Police abuse reported to the CSP delegation included beatings with fists, shields and truncheons, kicking and choking people by putting their arms around people’s necks to hold them tight.

Some interviewees told the CSP delegation that they suffered further abuse when being placed into police vehicles and on the way to the police station. Mariam Sargsyan, an NGO activist and member of Armenia’s National Preventive Mechanism, and Parliamentarian Aram Manukyan reported that they also received allegations of ill-treatment of protesters in police vehicles on the way to the police stations.

Astghik Aghekyan told the CSP monitors that shortly before the water cannon was turned on, she went to the back part of the gathering and saw how police in plainclothes twisted a man’s arms and took him to a civilian white Zhiguli car. Artur Mehrabyan, Deputy Head of Yerevan City Police Department, was with them and Astghik asked him why they were detaining the man. Reportedly, the officer shouted an offense at Astghik and she responded in a similar way. Later, when the water cannon was already in operation, policemen in plainclothes hit Astghik on the neck, tore her clothes, twisted her arm behind her back, hit and cursed her. She reported that, as he was carrying her back towards the police lines, a policeman in plainclothes used swear words against her, implying that he was retaliating for the earlier confrontation between her and Artur Mehrabyan. After this, the
policeman pushed and kicked her into the police vehicle. She reported that police took her and six others to the Malatia district police station.

**Levon Barseghyan** was in the front row of the protest when police started using water cannon to disperse the protest. In order not to be chased or taken away, he and other protesters created a chain by firmly holding their neighbours’ arms. At this point, he told the CSP delegation, police in plainclothes started beating and kicking him and protesters nearby. He said: “Uniformed police did not beat us, but they tried to move us apart so we could be detained”. “Six policemen grabbed me and forcibly destroyed the chain we had formed. Then police twisted my arm behind my back, handcuffed me and took me to a police vehicle.”

**Meri Hamzyan**, aged 18, told the CSP delegation on 28 June that after running away from the water cannon, she was looking for a friend on Freedom Square. She recalled that suddenly a very tall officer in plainclothes approached her and hit her on the neck with a police truncheon. She fell down but was then able to run away.

**Marina-Michel Boyajyan** reported that after she was severely hit by water cannon jets, some people helped her walk into a yard nearby, where she sat down to recover. A little later she returned to Marshal Baghramyan Avenue, wet and with a dishevelled look resulting from the protest’s dispersal. She described: “There were only a few people now. Police in plainclothes shouted at me ‘What do you look like! Get dressed!’ I shouted ‘You are inhuman! What have you done?’” Then one of them shouted she should also be detained. An officer grabbed her, dragged her away and when she said she was still a minor and not a citizen of Armenia, police reportedly hit her on her neck with a truncheon.

**A female protester** told the CSP delegation on 27 June that she was in one of the front rows when the protest was dispersed by water cannon and sustained bruises from the water jets. She escaped into one of the side streets of Marshal Baghramyan Avenue and went to the Opera on Freedom Square at around 8:00. She recalled: “As I was wet some policemen tried to get hold of me, but I shouted ‘I’m a citizen of another country!’ Then someone hit me with a truncheon twice, but I managed to escape.” The CSP delegates saw bruises on her body that, she reported, resulted from the dispersal by water cannon and police ill-treatment.

“Even when people said they would go with police voluntarily, the policemen twisted their arms, kicked their legs from behind so they fell down and […] carried or dragged them away. I even saw how they [police] were holding and dragging one person by his feet, so his face was on the ground.”

Radio Liberty journalist Sisak Gabrielyan
Anna Poghosyan told a CSP monitor on 26 June that she and her friends ran away from the water cannon jets and when they got to the Opera on Freedom Square, uniformed police officers shouted offensive words at her and one of her friends. Then police roughly grabbed the two young women, took them to a police car, which drove them to Erebuni district police station. “In the car, they continued to treat us very roughly”, she recalled.

Grigor Ghahramanyan met the CSP delegation on 27 June and reported that four uniformed policemen grabbed him by his hands, legs and jacket, beat and kicked him as they were dragging him to a police vehicle parked near the site of the dispersal. They also used truncheons to hit him.
Several interviewees observed how other people were ill-treated by police. In some cases, the names of the victims are not known.

Astghik Aghekyan told the CSP delegation that shortly after the water cannon was turned on she saw that a police officer in plainclothes “grabbed and squeezed the balls of a young man in a brown T-shirt and hit his neck with his elbow.”

Arshak Musakhanyan, a civic activist, told the CSP monitors on 27 June that on Freedom Square he saw police officers in uniform beat and kick three people using hands, feet and shields, whom they subsequently detained. He also saw three young women who told him in tears that police had beaten them. The foot of one of the girls was bleeding. He also saw how uniformed police beat a man where Marshal Baghramyan Avenue opens onto Freedom Square. When police left the man, who appeared to be drunk, he stumbled away with a beer bottle in his hand. It was unclear why the man was targeted.

Grigor Ghahramanyan recalled that before he was detained he saw police beating a young woman with a truncheon until she lost consciousness. “Then they threw her on a kiosk and left her there”, he recalled.

Rafael Ishkhanyan reported that he saw how a policeman was beating a person with a truncheon on the junction of Tumanyan Street and Saryan Street, some 400 to 450 metres away from where the protest had taken place.

Anna Zhamkochyan recalled seeing an American citizen with Armenian roots with blood on his head.

A demonstrator told a CSP delegate on condition of anonymity that, shortly after the dispersal, she saw how three police officers pushed a man to the ground in Saryan Park and then held him so he could not escape while an officer of the special police force – wearing a dark blue uniform, a helmet and a shield –
kicked and beat him with a truncheon. Then the officers dragged him across the asphalt. He shouted that he would follow them to the car, but they continued. When the man asked the officers not to hold him by his injured hand, they started hitting him on this hand. The officers took him to a car and drove away. The same interviewee told the CSP delegate that she saw how police were dragging another man along the asphalt: “One of the man’s legs and one hand were disabled, but the officers paid no attention to that. As they were dragging him, his boot fell off and his disabled leg was dragging along the asphalt, bleeding. Bystanders shouted to the police officers to leave the man alone, but the officers dragged him to the car and drove off.”

Journalists targeted

As soon as police started dispersing the demonstration, they also started targeting journalists. Police officers forcefully removed remaining journalists from the corridor between the police and the water cannon, on the one side, and the demonstrators, on the other. They also attempted to prevent journalists from reporting about the dispersal and from disseminating images of police brutality.

The CSP monitors met with several journalists who were subjected to physical abuse by police and had their equipment such as video and other cameras, memory cards and telephones confiscated, damaged or destroyed. Some of them were detained by police. Below you find several case examples of people interviewed by the CSP monitors.

Local and international media NGOs additionally documented the cases of more journalists who alleged to have been subjected to physical abuse by police. These include: Paylak Fahradyan of Gala TV, Garik Azibekyan of Radio Liberty, Karen Chilingaryan, Gor Hovhannisyan and Hovsep Hovsepyan of 1-in.am, Nikolay Torosyan and Karapet Sahakyan of Panorama.net, Gevorg Ghazaryan, freelancer, Davit Davtyan, Armenia TV and Ashot Boyajyan, a cameraman of the ACTV. Many more had their equipment confiscated and/or broken and memory cards were emptied.20

Several journalists have alleged that senior police officials such as Levon Yeranosyan, the First Deputy Head of the Police of Armenia and Commander of the Special Police Forces, Ashot Karapetyan, the Head of Yerevan Police, and Valery Osipyan, the Deputy Chief of Yerevan Police, witnessed the violence against journalists as they were standing on Freedom Square and did not try to prevent it. In a Radio Liberty report, dated 23 June, Radio Liberty cameraman Garik Azibekyan was reported as alleging that Levon Yeranosyan “attempted to punch him”, but when Garik backed away, Levon Yeranosyan “ordered four plainclothes officers to grab him and [to] severely beat him”.21 Some other journalists were also reported by media as saying that senior police officials ordered attacks on journalists in Freedom Square.22
Sisak Gabrielyan, a journalist of Radio Liberty, told the CSP on 26 June: “When the water cannon started operating policemen began pushing us to the sidewalk. We wanted to leave the street, but police in plainclothes were behind us and we couldn’t get away. A policeman came and, I suppose, intentionally broke the HDMI cable of our live broadcast. They took away some cameras, some journalists fell to the ground.” When Sisak Gabrielyan ran towards Freedom Square together with seven of his colleagues, police suddenly targeted their cameraman Garik Harutyunyan, held him by his hands and legs and carried him away. “Garik was trying to hold his camera, but one of the men hit it, so it fell down and broke. I ran towards them and shouted to stop, pointing out that we were journalists”, he recalled. However, the policeman pretended not to believe they were journalists and asked Sisak Gabrielyan to show his badge. “He took my badge that was around my neck, pulled it and threw it in my face. He twisted my arm and tried to hit me. I tried to pick up Garik’s camera. I have injuries on my arm and back from police hitting and scratching me.” Sisak Gabrielyan was able to escape to Freedom Square. Later he and his colleagues approached Police Lieutenant General Hunan Poghosyan, the First Deputy Head of the Police of Armenia, and explained that their cameraman had been detained. Sisak reported that the official “said he would instruct to release him, but when we conveyed the message to police in the police vehicle where Garik was kept the officer refused to release him, adding that everyone would be released in a short while.”

Right when police started dispersing the demonstration and police damaged Radio Liberty’s HDMI cable, thus ending the live broadcast, Artur Papyan, an editor at the Armenia Service of Radio Liberty, drove to the site of the dispersal with a new cable to fix the livestreaming. He told the CSP delegation on 26 June that he joined up with his colleagues and learnt that police had broken the cameras of two of their cameramen and that Garik Harutyunyan, one of them, had been detained by police (as also reported by Sisak Gabrielyan, as recounted above). According to Artur Papyan, when he and another Radio Liberty journalist approached Lieutenant General Levon Yeranosyan, asking him to help release cameraman Garik Harutyunyan, the general responded: “I don’t have time for you”. Later, Artur Papyan reported, a man in plainclothes with a shaved head and a police shield ran towards him, grabbed his mobile phone and smashed it on the ground. Artur recalled shouting: “I’m a journalist of Radio Liberty and you really don’t want to harm me or my phone.” Other policemen were watching the scene unmoved. “I tried picking up the phone, but the man pushed me with his shield and hand, took my phone, slammed it on the ground again, stepped on it and walked away.”

Tigran Hakobyan, a 27-year old cameraman at the Independent Journalists’ Network (Epress.am), told the CSP delegation on 25 June that as he was filming how a uniformed policeman with a helmet was beating a person on Freedom Square, police walked up to Tigran, twisted his arms and beat him with a truncheon on the neck. He recalled urging police “please, leave me, I’m coming [with you]”. Then an officer removed the memory card from his camera, returned the camera, put him in a police car and drove him to Yerevan’s Central district police station. The memory card was not returned to him. Narek Aleksanyan, a photographer, told the CSP delegation that he was near the Opera on Freedom Square at the same time and saw how police beat Tigran Hakobyan and others.

In a police statement issued on 23 June, police reported that those detained included “journalists who had consistently neglected the appeals and demands to keep a reasonable distance from the assembly venue and not to hinder police officers in the lawful performance of their duty, thus in fact becoming assembly participants.” The statement pointed out that “[w]hen covering demonstrations or public events, journalists must wear distinguishing signs and produce proper documents, as well as abstain from hindering police officers in the performance of their professional duties.”
However, as documented by live-streamed video footage and witness statements, the vast majority of journalists were wearing press badges and many tried to vacate the site after Yerevan Deputy Police Chief Valery Osipyan urged journalists to clear the corridor between the police and the demonstrators. In many cases, journalists urged police not to harm them and their equipment pointing out that they were journalists, but police ignored their appeals. It also appeared that journalists’ visible identification as journalists put them at particular risk as police were trying to prevent them from documenting police violence.

To our knowledge, there were only two cases where journalists may have become indistinguishable from protesters as they joined the protesters when police started dispersing the demonstration. One of the two is Seda Mavyan, a journalist of the French magazine Nouvelle d’Arménie. Shortly before the water cannon was turned on, she repeatedly urged police not to use force against peaceful protesters and then she called on the journalists not to free the corridor between the protesters and the police. She stayed in the corridor and police forcibly removed her. Another journalist, Levon Barseghyan, the head of Asparez Journalists Club, joined the protesters rows when the dispersal began. However, excessive force should neither be used against journalists nor demonstrators.

Allegations of arbitrary detention and treatment in police custody

“They told us we were at the police station in connection with a “hooliganism” case. Our status was unclear. Were we witnesses or suspects?” A detainee who wishes to remain anonymous.

“[D]eprivation of liberty means any form of detention or imprisonment or the placement of a person in a public or private custodial setting which that person is not permitted to leave at will by order of any judicial, administrative or other authority.” Article 4(2) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture

This chapter provides information on what subsequently happened with the protesters, civic activists and journalists who were apprehended by police. The first section focuses on issues related to their access to legal safeguards such as information about the grounds of detention, about their rights, and their contact with the outside world including prompt access to a lawyer. The second section focuses on conditions in detention and medical treatment.

Access to legal safeguards

As outlined in the previous chapter, demonstrators, civic activists and journalists reported that they and others were apprehended both by uniformed police and by police in plainclothes, who often subjected people to ill-treatment when detaining them. Rafael Ishkhanyan of the NGO Armenian Helsinki Committee, who was at the site of the demonstration as an observer, told the CSP delegation on 28 that he did not see a single case where police showed a means of identification to those they detained.

Many reported that, upon apprehension, police did not inform them why they were being detained. For example, two policemen in plainclothes tried to detain Hovhannes Ishkhanyan of the NGO Public Information and Need of Knowledge (PINK Armenia) as he was running towards Freedom Square. He told the CSP monitors on 27 June that he repeatedly asked the officers why they wanted to detain him, but they did not respond. Although further police arrived to help detain Hovhannes, he was able to escape. However, shortly afterwards, near the Saryan Statue in Saryan Park, some 170 metres away from Freedom
Square, two other policemen in plainclothes managed to catch him. They took him to a police vehicle. They also did not respond to his question why they were detaining him.

Human rights activist Rafael Ishkhanyan reported that five or more policemen approached him as he was standing in Saryan Park, observing the dispersal of the protest and the detentions of participants. Although he explained that he was an observer from a human rights organization, they said they wanted to take him to a police station, but failed to explain him what the legal grounds for this were. In the police car he explained his situation to a senior police officer, who decided to let him go.

The 237 demonstrators who were detained by police on 23 June were taken to different police stations in Yerevan and the neighbouring towns of Armavir and Ashtarak. Aram Manukyan, a member of Parliament of the opposition Armenian National Congress party, told CSP delegates on 25 June that he and two fellow-parliamentarians went to various police stations in Yerevan as observers on 23 June. Police reportedly told them that most detainees were taken to Yerevan’s central police station and that 56 people were held at Nor Nork district police station. Michael Nazaryan, who was detained at Arabkir district police station, estimated that over forty other protesters and civic activists were held there with him. Anahit Chilingaryan, a lawyer of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Vanadzor, reported that some 20 people were held at Malatia district police station. According to the activist Izabella Khanzratyan, she was one of around ten detainees at Shengavit district police station.

Several detainees told the CSP delegation they were held by police for many hours. Mariam Sargsyan told the CSP delegation of a 14-year old boy who was detained for ten hours, first without a relative at Mashtots police station in the Ajapnyak district of Yerevan, then together with his mother in Nor Nork district police station. Levon Barseghyan reported that he was detained at around 6:00, held at Nor Nork district police station and released at around 17:30, thus being detained around 11.5 hours. Anna Zhamkochyan was brought to Shengavit police station at 6:10 and was released over nine hours later, at 15:30. Grigor Ghahramanyan reported that he was detained for around 9.5 hours. He was put into a police vehicle after the protest dispersal at around 8:30. Then he was detained at Nor Nork district police station, from where he was taken for drug tests. He was discharged at around 18:00. Anna Poghosyan was believed to have been held in police custody a total of approximately 10 hours, first at Erebuni police station, then at another police station. Izabella Khanzratyan told the CSP delegation that she entered Shengavit district police station at around 7:00 and was discharged at 17:00, thus spending over ten hours in detention.

Several lawyers told the CSP delegation that all those taken into police custody in the course of the dispersal of the demonstration had the legal status of “witnesses”. Michael Nazaryan, who was held at Arabkir district police station, told the CSP delegation that police informed him and others held there that “we were not suspects, but unknown people committed hooliganism and we were there because they needed to find out who were the culprits [...] I refused to talk because I knew they could convert a witness into a suspect anytime.” However, many detainees the CSP delegates spoke to were not sure whether they were witnesses or suspects.

The lawyer Anahit Chilingaryan told the CSP delegation that she and a colleague asked officers at Malatia district police station on what basis the people were held. “They responded they are free to go, they only had to testify. But when I wanted to leave with my client they didn’t let us go. They kept finding pretexts why we couldn’t leave”, she reported.
Hovhannes Ishkhanyan of PINK Armenia reported that police at Shengavit district police station gave him a document stating that he had not complied with lawful police requests. When he asked what requests were meant, he got no reply. Then another police officer came and said the police record should be changed and as grounds for his detention they should fill in “hooliganism”. He was under the impression he was being held as a suspect in a criminal case. Robert Revazian, Hovhannes Ishkhanyan’s lawyer, told the CSP delegation on 26 June that when trying to gain access to his client, he spoke to the investigator at Shengavit district police station. The investigator told him Hovhannes Ishkhanyan was being held as a witness, not a suspect.

In some cases police apparently threatened detainees that they would open a criminal case against them unless they cooperated with the police questioning. For example, Anna Poghosyan reported that because she became known as not complying with police demands, she and a friend of hers were taken to the investigations department of another police station. Anna Poghosyan reported that the officers thought she was one of the organizers of the demonstration. “They asked to tell them everything I knew and that, if I cooperated with them, they would not open a criminal case against me, but they would continue to view me as a witness”, she recalled. Anna Poghosyan reported that a representative of the Ombudsman’s Office of Armenia negotiated with officers at Erebuni district police station and secured the release of Anna Poghosyan and other protesters.

Several individuals who were detained reported that police gave them a written or oral explanation of their rights. A man who was held at Yerevan central police station said that police read out their rights to a group of around 100 people, but it was not audible to all.

According to reports received by the CSP delegation, police treated detainees as if they were suspects, but when some pointed out that in this case detention records should be completed, police responded that as witnesses they could be held for many hours without such a procedure. In accordance with national law, witnesses are summoned by police, but in this case people were apprehended and taken to police stations by officers. Some detainees reported that they were handcuffed upon apprehension or shortly after and some eyewitnesses confirmed this practice. Many reported that telephones were confiscated in police vehicles or police stations and that they were thoroughly searched.

Tigran Hakobyan reported that as he was taken to Yerevan’s central police station in a police vehicle early on 23 June, police confiscated the phones of all detainees and only returned them when people were released later that day. Anahit Chilingaryan reported that police at Malatia district police station confiscated the phones of all detainees. Apparently, they made an exception in the case of Astghik Aghekyan, who told the CSP delegation that police at Malatia district police station returned her two phones when she explained that she had to stay in contact with her injured daughter. Anna Poghosyan reported that police took away cameras and dictophones from all detainees at Erebuni district police station.

Anna Zhamkochyan reported that she was searched by police at Shengavit district police station. Two people were asked to be witnesses during the search. One of them was the mother of a demonstrator. Astghik Aghekyan reported that when she arrived at Malatia district police station two young women were already waiting to be witnesses during searches of the new detainees.

Many people reported that they had to give fingerprints and were told they had to undergo drug and/or alcohol tests, practices that are common for suspects, not witnesses. On 24 June, Radio Liberty reported
Petros Semirjyan, Director of Yerevan Narcological Center in the northern Avan Arinj district, as saying that in his center tests were administered to a total of 106 people who were detained following the dispersal of the protest. Out of these, 44 underwent tests for alcohol and drugs, 48 drug tests, and 14 people were tested for alcohol only. Petros Semirjyan reportedly told journalists that the tests did not reveal any alcohol intake and that he was still awaiting the results of the drug tests.

Mikael Danielyan, the head of the Armenian Helsinki Association, told CSP monitors on 25 June that he talked to many detainees after they were released and found that many did not know they had the right to refuse the drug and alcohol tests. Hovhannes Ishkhanyan told CSP monitors that police threatened him that a refusal to take the drug test would be regarded as resisting police orders. Levon Barseghyan reported that when he refused to undergo the test, police told him he had no right to do so. Subsequently, a medical doctor contradicted the policeman and confirmed that the detainees were not obliged to do the test as there was no order by a prosecutor. Michael Nazaryan concluded that “the police didn’t have enough legal grounds to detain us for hooliganism, so they wanted us to take the drug test hoping to find something. If you have ever done drugs, it stays in your body for up to six months.”

Several detainees were able to make phone calls to inform lawyers of their whereabouts, asking them to come to the police stations where they were being held. Some detainees and their lawyers told the CSP delegation that police did not enable prompt access to a lawyer and, in some cases, even actively obstructed it. Anna Zhamkochyan told the CSP delegation that when she was searched by police, she borrowed a phone from one of the women whom the police had asked to be a witness during the search and called her lawyer Araik Papikyan at 11:35. Police let the lawyer wait outside the police station for 40 minutes before allowing him to see his client.

Hovhannes Ishkhanyan, detained at Shengavit district police station, was able to keep his phone while detained and called a relative and friends, who hired a lawyer for him. He told police that he would not respond to their questions without his lawyer. Hovhannes Ishkhanyan’s brother told him by phone that the lawyer had been waiting outside the police station for half an hour and Hovhannes Ishkhanyan urged police to promptly facilitate a meeting with his lawyer. After lengthy negotiations among police officers Hovhannes Ishkhanyan was able to speak to his lawyer, Robert Revazyan, in confidential circumstances at around 10:00. The lawyer advised him that as a witness he was under no obligation to undergo a drug or alcohol test. Then a senior police officer said that Hovhannes Ishkhanyan could leave the police station. Hovhannes recalled: “We were about to leave, but police stopped us. They asked us to wait for the head of the police station in one of the offices, together with a police lieutenant. We did as they asked, but when the lawyer left the room for a minute, the lieutenant locked the door. Robert Revazyan told the CSP delegation that when he left the room over five policemen, including senior officers, “stopped me and physically forced me out of the building. I called everyone, including the Ombudsman and the Chamber of Lawyers. Shortly afterwards I was readmitted to the building, but my client wasn’t there anymore.” Hovhannes Ishkhanyan reported that, in the meantime, police unlocked the door again and he saw several policemen on the corridor. He recalled: “I wanted to see my lawyer, but the lieutenant removed the battery from my phone. A policeman said the lawyer was outside, so I went with them outside, but they went through the back door, took me to a car and then drove me to the Drug Clinic of the hospital in Avan district.” At the Drug Clinic police threatened Hovhannes Ishkhanyan that unless he underwent the drug test they would open a criminal case against him for resisting police orders. Hovhannes gave in and took the drug test. Robert Revazyan told the CSP delegation: “After 90 minutes of trying to call my client, I was able to get through to him and at around 13:00 or 13:30 he was released.”
Some lawyers went to police stations to provide legal aid to detainees, no matter whether they were their clients or not. Some of them also experienced obstacles to communicate with the detainees.

Mariam Sargsyan, NGO activist and member of Armenia’s National Preventive Mechanism, told the CSP delegation that when she arrived at Nor Nork district police station in the second half of the day, lawyers were standing at the entrance and were not allowed in. Grigor Ghahramanyan, who was detained at Nor Nork district police station, reported that a lawyer sent by a group of parliamentarians, was not promptly admitted to the detainees because he did not know the names of those held at the police station. Grigor Ghahramanyan said the lawyer was permitted to speak to them at around 16:00. He had to wait to be admitted for two to three hours.

Several detainees told the CSP delegation that they were able to speak with the Ombudsman of Armenia or other representatives of his Office. For example, Tigran Hakobyan reported that a representative of the Ombudsman’s office informed those detained at Yerevan’s central police station that they were entitled by law to refuse taking a drug test and that most or all of those held at this station refused as a result.

Conditions in detention and medical treatment

The CSP delegation did not receive any allegations of physical abuse of detained protesters, civic activists or journalists in police stations.

Many reported that they were soaking wet after being targeted by water cannon jets, the clothes of many of them were torn, and – as it was still early in the morning and cold outside – many were freezing when they were being held at police stations for several hours. Anna Poghosyan reported that police at Erebuni district police station turned down a request by her and other detainees to shut the window. Some officers tried to help by offering their own jackets. Anna Zhamkochyan recalled that police at Shengavit police station offered her to call someone to fetch dry clothes.

Most reported being held at police stations until the afternoon or the evening without food. Some reported being offered tea, coffee or water and in some police stations, for example Malatia district police station, relatives were able to hand over food to the detained.

Agitated and in pain after the violent dispersal of the demonstration, Marina-Michel Boyajyan was sitting on a bench in Saryan Park between Marshal Baghramyan Avenue and Freedom Square, telling police and demonstrators and other individuals who were nearby that she needed medical aid. Medical personnel from an ambulance arrived quickly, but, according to her, they did not believe her when she said that she was injured. The doctor kept massaging her back, although she told him to stop because of the pain. She did not trust this medical team and refused their assistance. A little later a female doctor arrived in an ambulance and brought Marina-Michel to the hospital, together with another injured young woman.

Medical treatment was not always provided promptly to those who had sustained injuries during the dispersal of the protest and there were reports that the treatment was not always adequate. In some cases, representatives of the Ombudsman’s Office, lawyers or human rights defenders got involved to ensure that people received appropriate medical treatment.

Mariam Sargsyan, NGO activist and member of Armenia’s NPM, told the CSP delegation that police at Yerevan’s central police station referred all injured detainees to hospital. Later she went to Nor Nork district
police station and saw “many people with injuries. Police didn’t provide them with medical assistance. At around 15:00 we called an ambulance for a young man with an eye injury sustained as a result of beatings.”

Shoghakat Vardanyan was in pain and requested medical treatment as soon as she entered Erebuni district police station. However, she told CSP monitors that it took the ambulance over an hour to arrive. A doctor reportedly criticized her for participating in the meeting and she said “I didn’t trust him and he didn’t let me know what he was doing, so I refused further treatment from him.” Later, after Shoghakat had undergone a drug test, an ambulance came with another doctor, who took her to a hospital in Erebuni district. She reported that a policeman came to the hospital in the afternoon. “He told me to sign a paper, which I did although I was feeling bad”, she recalled. Later the policeman wanted to take her back to the police station, but medical staff insisted that she should stay. At around 22:00 Shoghakat went home from the hospital.

Anna Zhamkochyan reported that she was very cold and felt she had a temperature and asked police for appropriate medication. Police at Shengavit district police station said that the medication she requested was not available.

Levon Barseghyan told the CSP delegation that he has an illness that requires him to take a certain medication every day. He recalled that when he was detained at Nor Nork district police station “the officers checked if they had the pills I need, but then they said ‘this is not a pharmacy’.”

Marina-Michel Boyajyan told a CSP delegate that when she was in hospital she talked with her mother, Astghik Aghekyan, on the phone. Her mother, who was held at Malatia district police station at the time, complained of physical pain and Marina-Michel called a representative of the Ombudsman’s Office to arrange for her mother to be taken to hospital. Later that morning Astghik Aghekyan arrived at the hospital.

Accountability for human rights violations committed during the 23 June events

During the Yerevan visit of the CSP fact-finding mission, several protesters and journalists told the delegation that they were planning to submit complaints about human rights violations committed by police during the 23 June events to the authorities, urging them to bring the perpetrators to justice. Astghik Aghekyan, Marina-Michel Boyajyan and Meri Hamzyan had obtained medical forms from the hospital confirming their injuries in order to attach them to the complaints. IPHR has copies of the forms.

Epress.am reported on 30 June that 16 Armenian citizens, two of them journalists, had jointly submitted an urgent appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on 28 June, detailing allegations of human rights violations police subjected them to during the 23 June events.28

On 3 July 2015, the Special Investigation Service (SIS) of Armenia issued a press release stating that it had opened a criminal case for “obstructing the professional activities of a journalist” (Article 164, part 2 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia), “exceeding official authority” (Article 309, part 2) and “intentional destruction or damage of property” (Article 185, part 1) in relation to the 23 June events and that it was carrying out a preliminary investigation. It also stated that having “[s]tudied […] the communications, materials and video recordings published in mass media”, it had concluded that “on June 23, 2015, as well as the following days, persons carrying out special state service, evidently exceeding the
scope of their powers, used force towards protest participants and a number of journalists covering these events, caused bodily injuries, damaged or destroyed their video recording equipment, thereby preventing the journalists from conducting their lawful professional activities, causing essential damage to the rights and legal interests of persons, organizations, to the legal interests of the society and the state.”

According to media reports, some journalists have already been interrogated in connection with the case opened by the SIS.  

Legal assessment of the 23 June events

This chapter provides an assessment of key human rights aspects of the events of 23 June 2015 in the light of applicable provisions of national and international law.

Starting point: The right to freedom of assembly and other fundamental rights

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is protected by the Constitution of Armenia, as well as by international human rights treaties that have been ratified by Armenia and form an integral part of its legal system. Article 29 of the Constitution stipulates that: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of peaceful and unarmed assembly.” Article 11 of the European Convention for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) both provide guarantees for the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. This right is also safeguarded by OSCE human dimension commitments, in particular the 1990 Copenhagen Document.

The exercise of the right to freedom of assembly in Armenia is regulated by the 2011 Law on Freedom of Assembly. This law contains detailed provisions on different aspects of holding an assembly, which is defined as the temporary peaceful and unarmed presence of two or more individuals in any location for the purpose of formulating or expressing common opinion on issues of public interest.

When assessing the 23 June events in Armenia in view of ensuring respect for the right to peaceful assembly, the Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) provide invaluable guidance. Case law of the ECtHR is also an important reference point.

Aside from the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, other fundamental rights relevant for the current analysis include, in particular, the right to freedom of expression, the right to liberty and security, the ban on torture and inhuman or degrading treatment and due process and fair trial rights. These rights are protected by Chapter 2 of the Armenian Constitution, including its articles 16, 17, 20 and 27, as well as the ECHR, the ICCPR and other international human rights treaties and standards that the Armenian authorities are obliged to uphold.

The nature of the demonstration: Was it a peaceful assembly?
National and international law only protects assemblies that are peaceful in nature. Therefore, the first point of clarification is if the demonstration covered by this report was peaceful.

As set out in the ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, an assembly should be deemed peaceful if its organizers have professed peaceful intentions and the conduct of the
assembly is non-violent. The term “peaceful” should be interpreted to include conduct that may annoy or give offence, and even conduct that temporarily hinders, impedes or obstructs the activities of third parties.  

Based on the case law of the ECtHR, the only type of events that do not qualify as “peaceful assemblies” are those in which the organizers and participants have intended to use violence. An assembly should be deemed peaceful unless there is compelling and demonstrable evidence that those organizing or participating in that particular event themselves intend to use, advocate or incite imminent violence. Assemblies involving purely passive resistance should be characterized as peaceful. The use of violence by a small number of participants should not automatically lead to the categorization of an otherwise peaceful assembly as non-peaceful.

The CSP mission found that the demonstration on 22-23 June was peaceful and the demonstrators behaved non-violently, singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and chanting slogans such as “We won’t pay”, “No to Plunder” and “We’re the owners of our country, we’re Armenia”. The mission members found no evidence to support allegations that some protesters threw stones at police, as reported by media citing police sources. No official statement was made by police on this matter and no details were provided about the policemen who allegedly were injured because of such incidents. All interlocutors of the CSP mission described the protest as peaceful. While there were some reports of water bottles being thrown, this happened after the dispersal of the protest had started, and the aim was the water cannon that was being used against protesters.

Even if isolated participants would be shown to have thrown objects at police, this should not have resulted in the whole assembly being deemed non-peaceful and any intervention should in that case have been aimed at dealing with those particular individuals rather than dispersing the whole event. Given the peaceful nature of the demonstration, it qualifies for protection.

The issue of notification

As highlighted by the ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, requiring advance notification for holding an assembly is not necessary under international human rights law. Prior notification should only be required where its purpose is to enable the state to put in place necessary arrangements to facilitate freedom of assembly and to protect public order, public safety and the rights and freedoms of others. The authorities should always protect and facilitate any spontaneous assembly so long as it is peaceful in nature.

The Armenian Law on Freedom of Assembly requires the organizers of assemblies with over 100 participants to notify the authorities in advance, no later than seven days prior to the assembly. The law also provides for holding spontaneous and urgent assemblies in cases when the timeline for notification cannot be met and the purpose is to immediately or urgently respond to events taking place. It states that if a spontaneous assembly “has a de-facto organizer”, this organizer “shall be obliged to immediately inform the police” about the assembly and that such assemblies “may not last longer than six hours”.

CSP mission members were able to verify that organizers sent an advance notification to the authorities about the protest held at Freedom Square in Yerevan on 19 June. According to the notification, the organizers planned to hold the assembly from 18:00 to 23:00 o’clock that day. Participants eventually spontaneously decided to continue demonstrating until they received a satisfactory response from the
government, first by carrying out a sit-in until 22 June and thereafter by marching towards the Presidential Palace on Marshal Baghramyan Avenue and holding a protest in the vicinity of this building, behind a police blockade. These continued protests were not covered by the notification. However, protesters publicly announced that they would carry out the sit-in action and called on the authorities to respond to their complaints concerning the planned increase in electricity prices.

Even if the authorities did not receive formal notice of the protests held after 19 June and these protests continued for a longer period of time than that set out for spontaneous protests by national law, these factors did not in themselves justify dispersing the demonstration on 23 June as long as it remained peaceful (as discussed above).

The issue of the grounds invoked for restricting the assembly

Freedom of assembly can be restricted only on grounds that are strictly defined by law. The legitimate grounds for such restrictions are prescribed by the relevant international and regional human rights instruments, and these should neither be supplemented by additional grounds in domestic legislation, nor loosely interpreted by the authorities.

Relevant international treaties provide an exhaustive list of grounds that a state can refer to when restricting the freedom of peaceful assembly. These include: interests of national security, public safety, and prevention of disorder or crime, protection of health and morals and protection of the rights and freedoms of others. The Armenian Law on Freedom of Assembly sets out that the grounds for restricting freedom of assembly include those on this list, while also stating that it shall be prohibited to exercise freedom of assembly for the purpose of “forcibly overthrowing the constitutional order, inciting ethnic, racial, or religious hatred, or advocating violence or war.”

Examining the actions and statements made by Armenian authorities in relation to the dispersal of the protest on 23 June, it appears that they sought to describe these actions as being aimed at protecting the rights and freedoms of others, as well as public safety/order.

Soon after the dispersal, the Prosecutor General’s Office issued a statement announcing that a criminal investigation had been opened under Article 258 of the Armenian Criminal Code (“hooliganism”) in relation to the protest actions preceding the dispersal. More specifically, the statement claimed that “a group of people disturbed public order by conducting an illegal assembly, a march and a sit-in on Marshal Bagramyan Avenue from 19.30 on 22 June into the night of 22 to 23 June”. This criminal case was later used to justify the detention of dozens of protesters as “witnesses” of these events. No information has been provided by authorities about concrete actions that would have disturbed public order, leaving it unclear what those may have been.

As already noted above, the CSP monitors did not obtain any information that would have supported media reports, made with reference to police sources, that some protesters would have thrown stones at police. While some of those interviewed reported seeing a few water bottles being thrown, this was after the dispersal had started and in the direction of the water cannon that was targeted at protesters with high pressure.

In his loudspeaker announcements prior to the dispersal of the protest, the Yerevan Deputy Police Chief requested that the protesters “stop their illegal actions” and “move to Freedom Square or another square.
of your choice, which is not a main traffic route”, suggesting that disruption of traffic may have been one consideration in the dispersal of the protest. No further information on this was provided. As pointed out in the ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Assembly, temporary disruption of vehicular or pedestrian traffic is not, of itself, a reason to impose restrictions on an assembly.\(^49\)

As already noted above, holding this protest as such, even if it did not fully meet the procedural requirements of the Armenian Law on Freedom of Assembly, did not constitute a legitimate ground for dispersing it, and in particular not in such a harsh way as it was done.

The issue of the proportionality of the actions of authorities

As highlighted in the ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, states have a positive duty under international human rights law to take reasonable and appropriate measures to enable peaceful assemblies to take place without participants fearing physical violence.\(^50\) If a stand-off or other dispute arise during the course of an assembly, negotiation or mediated dialogue should be used to reach an acceptable solution.\(^51\)

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials stipulate that: “law enforcement officials, in carrying out their duty, shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. They may use force and firearms only if the other means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the intended result. When using force, law enforcement officials shall exercise restraint and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and to the legitimate objective to be achieved. Law enforcement officials must seek to minimize damage and injury”.\(^52\) These Principles also state that: “Governments shall ensure that arbitrary or abusive use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials is punished as a criminal offence under their law.” Under international human rights law, torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is prohibited at all times and must be investigated and prosecuted.\(^53\)

Article 33 of the Armenian Law on Freedom of Assembly stipulates that “police may terminate an assembly only if there is no other possibility of preventing disproportionate restrictions of the constitutional rights of others or public interest.” This article also states that police should address a demand to terminate an assembly to its leader, who is obliged to immediately inform the participants. If there is no leader of the assembly or this person fails to comply with the demand made, a police representative should at least twice make a loudspeaker announcement demanding that the participants terminate the assembly and setting a reasonable time for doing so.

According to Article 34 of the Law on Freedom of Assembly, an assembly may be dispersed if it is not voluntarily terminated within the timeframe given.

In accordance with Article 29 of the Armenian Law on Police, police officials are obliged to give prior warning before resorting to the use of physical force, “special means” or firearms, thus giving sufficient time to comply with lawful demands and to stop the action in question. The only exception are cases when delaying the use of forceful methods or firearms poses a direct threat to the life and health of citizens or a police official, or may have other serious implications or where providing a warning is impossible.

As outlined above, the Armenian authorities should not in the first place have dispersed the demonstration on 23 June since it was peaceful in nature and did not pose any clear threat to public safety or the rights
and freedoms of others. Nevertheless, when authorities decided to resort to force, they had an obligation to ensure that the use of force was strictly proportionate to the supposed danger posed by the demonstration. Even if the demonstration was deemed unlawful according to domestic law, this did not justify the use of excessive force to disperse the crowd.54

Representatives of the police did warn protest participants ahead of the dispersal of the protest. Yerevan’s Deputy Police Chief Velary Osipyan made two consecutive announcements in the early morning of 23 June, calling on the demonstrators to retreat to Freedom Square and liberate Marshal Baghramyan Avenue. During the second announcement, he also stated that demonstrators had ten minutes to vacate the spot, or else police would disperse the crowd. However, the dispersal started within less than 10 minutes after this second announcement was made.

Moreover, the dispersal of the protest was carried out in an unjustifiably harsh manner. The pressure of the water cannons used was increased to the point that protesters were knocked off their feet and when detaining protesters police chased, kicked, hit and beat many of them, although protesters in most cases did not put up any physical resistance. Victims and witnesses interviewed by the CSP monitors testified that the police abuse included beatings with fists, shields and truncheons, kicking and choking people by putting their arms around people’s necks to hold them tight. As confirmed by the CSP monitors, dozens of people sustained injuries as a result of the use of water cannon and the abusive treatment of police in connection with the detentions carried out. Among the injuries recorded by medical personnel at an emergency room visited by CSP monitors were contusions, bruises and abrasions of different parts of the body including the eye, head, shoulder, arms, chest, back and knees.

Plainclothes police officers who took part in the dispersal appear to have played an active role in the abuse of demonstrators. As testified by interlocutors of the CSP mission and confirmed by available video footage, the plainclothes officers wore only police armbands (which they in many cases put on or unveiled only when the dispersal started) and no other means/signs of identification. Available video footage shows plainclothes officers acting particularly harshly when detaining demonstrators. Some of those apprehended with whom the CSP mission spoke reported being subjected to further abuse in police vehicles while being taken to nearby police stations.

The heavy-handed tactics used by police when dispersing the protest on 23 June, combined with the active involvement of plainclothes police officers and the mass detentions carried out indicate that the use of force was excessive in relation to the objectives authorities were allegedly pursuing.

Was the detention of demonstrators justified?

Official sources confirmed that the police detained a total of 237 persons in connection with the dispersal of the demonstration on 23 June. Apprehended individuals were taken to different district police stations of Yerevan, as well as the neighbouring towns of Armavir and Ashtarak.

The CSP delegation was informed that those taken into police custody had the status of “witnesses”. Detainees interviewed by the CSP mission were, however, often not sure about their status and in practice many of them were treated as suspects and were e.g. searched, fingerprinted and sent to undergo alcohol and drug tests. Some detainees reported being handcuffed upon apprehension or shortly thereafter, as also confirmed by some eyewitnesses. Several detainees reported being held for as many as 9 hours or more. Eventually all of those detained were released without charge by the evening of 23 June.
According to the Armenian Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), only the following individuals may be detained: those who are suspected of committing crimes that may result in the deprivation of liberty and those charged with crimes who have violated the terms of preventive measures (article 128). As regards witnesses, the CPC provides that they may be summoned for interrogation by the investigating body or interrogated at the place where the preliminary investigation is conducted or, when necessary, where they “find themselves” (articles 205 and 206). Prior to conducting an interrogation, the investigator is obliged to inform witnesses about which case they are interrogated in relation to (article 206). According to the Armenian Code on Administrative Offenses, individuals may be subjected to administrative detention for up to three hours in “exceptional cases” (article 262).

The exclusive purpose of the summoning of witnesses before the competent authority is to obtain testimony from them. Holding witnesses beyond what is needed to achieve this purpose should be considered unlawful. Armenian authorities sought to justify the prolonged detention of “witnesses” with the lack of a sufficient number of qualified personnel at the local police stations to record testimonies. While this explanation may appear plausible at first sight, the prolonged and unjustified detention of dozens of individuals could have been avoided by taking note of their personal and contact details and summoning them for interrogation at a later stage. As noted above, while described as “witnesses”, detainees were often treated as suspects and many reported not being clear about their status while in detention.

A proper assessment of the lawfulness of detentions can only be done by carefully examining the circumstances of each individual case. However, the information presented in this report raises serious questions regarding the nature of the detentions and suggests that many protesters were arbitrarily detained.

Were demonstrators informed about the reasons for their detention?

Several persons interviewed by the CSP mission reported that, upon apprehension, police did not inform them why they were being detained. Even some who insisted on being informed about the reasons failed to get any explanation from the police representatives. Others testified that police gave them a written or oral explanation of their rights. A man who was held at the Central Police Station in Yerevan said that police read out rights of detainees to a group of around 100 persons, but it was not audible to all. As noted above, in many cases, detainees did not appear to receive clear information as to whether they were held as “witnesses” or “suspects”.

The right to be informed about the reasons for one’s detention is guaranteed under Article 16 of the Armenian Constitution, which states that “every person deprived of liberty shall be promptly informed about the reasons in a language understandable to him or her and, in case a criminal charge is brought, about the charge as well.” Article 11(4) of the Criminal Procedure Code further specifies that a person who is detained “must immediately be given explanations and grounds for his/her arrest”.

It can be argued to be justifiable, on the whole, to provide information to detainees about their rights with some delay, as was the case with respect to some of those detained on 23 June. Notifications with six to eight hours of delay, for example, were found by the ECtHR to meet the criteria of promptness. This being said, the right to be informed about the reasons of arrest were clearly violated in those cases when authorities failed to provide any explanation or this explanation was not sufficiently clear.
Did the apprehended demonstrators have unhindered access to a lawyer while in detention?

In accordance with the Constitution of Armenia, everyone has the right to legal assistance from the moment they are apprehended. In cases prescribed by law, legal assistance is provided free of charge.

In accordance with the provisions of international human rights treaties, and as emphasized by international human rights bodies, the right to have access to a lawyer is a key element of due process and fair trial rights. The ECtHR has pointed out on numerous occasions that the right to communicate with a legal representative is a basic requirement under the Convention. This includes access to a lawyer at the initial stages of a police interrogation, unless there are compelling reasons not to provide such access.

The CSP monitors documented several cases, which raise concerns about violations of the right to have prompt access to a lawyer. As detailed in the chapter on access to legal safeguards of this report, some detainees and their lawyers told the CSP delegation that police did not enable prompt access to a lawyer and, in some cases, even actively obstructed it, e.g. by preventing lawyers who were called to police stations to see their clients for a long time.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this report, we would like to make a number of recommendations to the authorities of Armenia on how to ensure accountability and justice for human rights violations documented during the events of 23 June 2015, as well as on preventing similar violations in future. We urge the EU and the rest of the international community to insist on implementation of these recommendations by the Armenian government.

The authorities of Armenia should:

- Undertake prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigations into all allegations of unlawful conduct by law enforcement officials in connection with the dispersal of the protest in Yerevan on 23 June. Investigations should be carried out with respect to all of the following allegations, ensuring a careful examination of the circumstances of each individual case where violations are alleged, including those documented in this report:

  - Allegations that the peaceful protest was dispersed, although it posed no clear threat to public order or security or the rights and freedoms of others.

  - Allegations that law enforcement officials involved in the dispersal of the protest resorted to forceful means without exhausting non-violent ones, gave little time for participants to respond to the warning that the event would be dispersed, and failed to ensure that the use of force was strictly proportionate and aimed at minimizing damage and injury.

  - Allegations that protest participants and journalists were chased, hit, kicked, beaten and subjected to other ill-treatment by police, as well as allegations that senior police officers present failed to prevent and stop such actions and, in some cases even instructed lower-level officers to use harsh treatment against individuals being apprehended.
- Allegations that plainclothes police officers, who wore only police armbands that they put on or unveiled shortly before the dispersal of the protest started and no other signs of identification, took an active part in the detention and ill-treatment of protesters.

- Allegations that police confiscated, damaged or destroyed the equipment of journalists covering the protest and obstructed their work.

- Allegations of arbitrary and unlawful detentions of protest participants, as well as of detainees being treated as suspects, although they were supposedly held as witnesses.

- Allegations that police officials who detained individuals did not identify themselves and failed to grant detainees access to legal safeguards, including by informing them of the reasons for their detention and their rights and status as detainees and ensuring that all had prompt access to legal assistance and were able to contact family members.

- Allegations of inadequate treatment of individuals in detention, such as not giving them anything to eat for hours on end and of intimidation of detainees.

- Allegations of the failure to ensure prompt access to medical assistance of those who suffered injuries during the dispersal of the protest and the detention of participants.

- Ensure that all officials found responsible for human rights violations during the events of 23 June, including those with command and supervision responsibility, are held accountable and are appropriately sanctioned with national and international law. All sanctions imposed should be commensurate with the severity of the violations committed.

- Grant victims of human rights violations during the events of 23 June adequate compensation.

- Ensure that none of the initiators or participants in the protest that was dispersed on 23 June is charged with or convicted of any offense merely for exercising their right to peaceful assembly as protected by national and international law.

- Ensure that any individuals who are summoned as witnesses in relation to the ongoing “hooliganism” investigation can enjoy the full legal safeguards foreseen by national and international law.

- Bring national legislation and practice on holding and policing assemblies into full compliance with international human rights standards. In particular, the authorities should ensure that peaceful assemblies can take place without inference, that any actions to disperse protests are used only as a last resort exclusively on grounds prescribed by international human rights law, and that the means employed for dispersal are strictly necessary and proportionate in any given situation.

- Conduct adequate training for law enforcement officials on the policing of assemblies and the treatment of detainees in accordance with international human rights standards and review law enforcement instructions, procedures and oversight structures to effectively prevent violations.

- Ensure that all individuals deprived of their liberty are informed of their rights from the outset of their detention, have immediate access legal and medical assistance, can notify a person of their choice, and are brought promptly before a judge, as called for by international human rights bodies.\(^5^9\)
grabbed a camera from a cameraman and threw it on the ground. I quickly shot a couple of images and tried to run away. They

Levon Yeranosyan (he is also the Deputy Chief of Police), ordered to “hunt” for journalists. He served as the first example:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KV0CEa2jTg (the beginning of the dispersal, 1-in.am)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqlMJlr5x8 (dispersal and apprehensions of demonstrators, by Tehmine Yanoqyan of Lragir.am)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q17bhe-kF4M (dispersal and apprehensions, 1-in.am)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGOwasGIWRS (dispersal, chasing demonstrators towards Freedom Square, and apprehensions of demonstrators, 1-in.am)

Links to other key videos featuring specific cases or topics mentioned in this report are referred to in the relevant chapters of this document.

4 These allegations are based on statement issued by ENA (in Armenian: www.psrc.am/am/announcements/anews/2135-1) that was analyzed and criticized by journalists in Armenia.
5 See www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk2iAu-TPw0 (Video footage about policemen in plainclothes at the site of the demonstration, by Lragir.am journalist Tehminé Yenoqyan).
6 Hetq.am posted the following photos illustrating the dispersal by water cannon: http://hetq.am/eng/news/61066/yerevan-photo-story-police-disperse-peacefulectricity-rate-hike-protest.html

7 At the end of the following video by A 1+ TV one can see that only one out of three people wears a “police” armband while they are hitting and detaining a young man: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kpNno_LMj0&feature=youtu.be&t=16m41s
8 According to the ICRA website, the “Investigative Committee is an independent body created on the base of the law adopted by RA National Assembly and is authorized to conduct preliminary investigation of the apparent crimes within the limits of its competence envisaged by RA Criminal Procedure Code”.

9 See www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/06/26/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-meeting-with-Minister-of-Trasport-of-Russia/
11 This is the formulation as found on the official website of the President of Armenia: www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2015/06/27/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-meeting-with-economic-block/
12 http://armenpress.am/eng/news/810018/nstacuyccy-crelu-hetevanqov-shtapognutyan-tsaryutyun.html According to Armenpress, ambulances took them to the Medical Centre of St. Gregory the Enlightened (eight patients), the medical centers Erebuni (four patients) and Aramyants (one patient) and Heratsi hospital (two patients). The news report also states that 11 policemen were wounded. No further details are given of these cases and it is not clear whether they were allegedly among the 25 who required emergency medical aid.
13 At www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kpNno_LMj0&feature=youtu.be&t=16m41s
14 Later several media outlets published the information received from the Police’s information department. See, for example: http://civilnet.am/2015/06/23/electricity-protest-unprecedented-number-of-citizens-detained/#.V25z-8Oqckq
15 For example, refer to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q17bhe-kF4M and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kpNno_LMj0&feature=youtu.be&t=16m41s
16 Refer to the first part of the following video footage for confirmation of her report: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZi1Ah_Y3ps (starting 00:15). Also refer to: https://youtu.be/Q17bhe-kF4M?t=7m34s (starting 07:34).
17 She requested that her identity be withheld for security reasons.
18 The highlighting in the quote was added by the authors of the report.
19 An interviewee identified the disabled man as the man who is placed into the police vehicle at 07:08: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZi1Ah_Y3ps
20 Refer to the following reports for further information on these case: http://hcav.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Zekuycangl.pdf and www.rferl.org/content/armenia-police-target-journalists-in-breaking-up-protest/27089374.html
21 www.rferl.org/content/armenia-police-target-journalists-in-breaking-up-protest/27089374.html
22 For example, Hakob Karapetyan’s (iLur.am online news) wrote on his Facebook page: “The commander of the special police forces, Levon Yeranosyan (he is also the Deputy Chief of Police), ordered to “hunt” for journalists. He served as the first example: he grabbed a camera from a cameraman and threw it on the ground. I quickly shot a couple of images and tried to run away. They
caught and took me to the deputy chiefs Hunan Poghosyan and Yeranosyan. Poghosyan ordered to take the memory card out of
the camera and to give it to him. At that moment Yeranosyan was growling and cursing. I had managed to hide the memory card
but a policeman had noticed so they searched me and took it away. Deputy chief Poghosyan promised: “You’ll get it back empty
from the police station.” So when I asked the policeman who had taken the memory card, to which police station I should come,
he asked: “What for?” I said: “For the memory card.” He says: “What card? Are you kidding me?”
23 This is the formulation as found on the official website of the Police of the Republic of Armenia:
24 Refer to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI7bhe-kF4M (at 8:40).
25 Armenia acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading
Treatment or Punishment in September 2006.
26 Grigor Ghahramanyan and Hovhannes Ishkhanyan, for example, reported being given a document outlining their rights by
police at Nor Nork and Shengavit district police stations, respectively.
27 See video footage (starting 1:00) on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZAR5BPcaYQ and (starting 25:36)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI7bhe-kF4M.
29 This is the formulation as found on the official website of the Special Investigation Service of Armenia:
30 For example, on 8 July, journalist Hakob Karapetyan told Aravot Daily that the police had sent his complaint to the Police's
Internal Security Department (ISD) instead of forwarding it to the SIS. The ISD invited Hakob and its deputy head promised him to
compensate his memory card, i.e. to buy a new one of the same value and of the same model on the condition that he withdraw
his complaint. (the news report in Armenian: http://www.aravot.am/2015/07/08/591345/).
31 An unofficial English translation is available at: http://www.legislationline.org/documents/action/popup/id/16523
32 The Guidelines are available at: http://www.osce.org/odihr/73405?download=true
33 ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 1.3.
34 Cisse v. France (2002), para.37
35 Christian Democratic People’s Party v. Moldova (No.2) (2010), para.23
37 Compare previous footnote.
38 ODIHR/Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 4.1
39 Ibid. principle 4.1.
40 ODIHR/Venice Commission, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 4.2.
41 Articles 9 and 12 of the Law on Freedom of Assembly.
42 Articles 26 and 27.
43 Rassemblement Jurassien Unité Jurassienne v. Switzerland (1979), p.119
45 See ICCPR Article 21 and ECHR Article 11.
46 Article 5 of the Law on Freedom of Assembly.
47 See http://prosecutor.am/am/news/6293/
48 Criminal Code article 258 on “hooliganism” reads as follows (unofficial translation):
1. Hooliganism is a grave violation of public order, which is manifested in express disrespect and accompanied with violence in
relation to citizens or a threat to use it, as well as destruction or damage of property. It is punished with correctional labor for a
term of up to 6 months, or with arrest for a term of 1-3 months, or with imprisonment for a term of up to 2 years.
2. A grave breach of public order combined with exceptional cynicism, is punished with correctional labor for up to 1 year or
imprisonment for up to 3 years
3. The action envisaged in part 1 or 2 of this Article, committed:
   1) by a group of persons or organized group;
   2) by offering resistance to a representative of authorities, or a person carrying out a duty of public order protection or a person
      preventing breach of public order,
   3) by a person who has previously committed hooliganism
4) combined with medium gravity damage to the health of a person, is punished with correctional labor for 1-2 years, or
   imprisonment for up to 5 years
4. The act envisaged in parts 1, 2 or 3 of this Article, committed with a weapon or another item used as a weapon, is punished
with imprisonment for the term of 4 to 7 years.
ODIHR/Venice Commission, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, par. 80.

OSCE Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 5.3.

Ibid. 5.4.

Basic principles of the Use of Force and Firearms, principles 4 and 5.

ICCPR Article 7, ECHR Article 3, the Convention against Torture.


See O’Harra v UK.

See for example Ocalan v. Turkey (2005).

Salduz v Turkey (2008).


See Concluding observations on Armenia adopted by the UN Human Rights Committee at its 105th session, July 2012 and the Concluding observations on Armenia adopted by the UN Committee against Torture on 6 July 2012.