TGEU Press Statement: Protect Trans Rights Activists in Armenia

statement & call to action, protection from violence and hate

Historic trans rights speech at Armenian National Assembly leads to death threats

It is with great shock and alarm that TGEU has learned of today's developments in Armenia. Following Lilith Martirosyan's historic speech at the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on April 5th, she and her staff at Right Side NGO have been the target of political intimidations and harassment, death threats, and public condemnation by religious and political leaders.

Lilith, a valued member of TGEU's Board, had been invited to speak and advocate for the human rights of transgender persons; an important first in the National Assembly's history. TGEU applauds Lilith's courage, Right Side NGO's effective trans rights advocacy, and the National Assembly's willingness to learn about the lived reality of transgender Armenians.

Today's protest at the doorsteps of the National Assembly and publication of personal contact details of Right Side NGO's staff in the media, however, fuels anti-trans sentiments and has led to (death) threats and intimidations. We are deeply concerned for Lilith and her staff's safety and well-being. We strongly urge:

- The government of the Republic of Armenia, its international partners and the Armenian civil society to closely monitor the situation, and guarantee the safety and well-being of Lilith Martirosyan and the staff of Right Side NGO;
- The National Assembly President and MPs to examine Naira Zohrabyan's discriminatory attitude in the Ethics Committee of the National Assembly and terminate her power as a chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Public Affairs;
- The Ombudsmen to investigate Naira Zohrabyan's and other public authorities' discriminative attitude against transgender activists and the trans community, and to carefully follow the development of the situation, the work of the state bodies regarding the situation, especially the work done by the Police;
- The Armenian Police to ensure the safety of the victims of the threats, to conduct transparent and impartial investigations, and prevent new incidents;
- All Armenian political parties to demand a calm, non-violent solution of the situation, and protect the Republic of Armenia's separation of church and state;
- Armenian media and social media platforms to stop the dissemination of fraudulent, aggravating and hateful materials, and to respect the victim's constitutional right to private life.