

## *Article 27 Freedom of Expression*

### **Talk shows**

**March 19 –April 25, 2013**

**Alternative Resources in Media:** “Elections observation by the citizens”, “Does citizen journalism resolve the Freedom of Expression issue in Armenia?”, “Civic movements in Armenia”

### **March 19 - April 2 broadcast**

#### 1. Male

I am calling from Armavir. Through your program, I would like to pass on the following idea to the Mayor – there should be a Monument Park established in Yerevan, where all sculptors can place their sculptures on a competitive basis. After a certain period of time, we will end up with a very pleasant leisure spot both for the local population and for visitors from abroad, for tourists. Second, I'm very happy to see that today you invited people to the studio from outside Yerevan, from the regions – Martuni, in this specific case. I'm happy to see that, this means that your team is definitely not of the opinion that Armenia consists only of Yerevan. Thank you.

#### 2. Female

You know, there has been a lot of talk – even since Soviet times - about making Yerevan an attractive tourist destination. We've been talking about it from Soviet days all the way up to today, but nothing is being done. I am 73 years old and I remember very well what programs and things we had back then, what kind of culture does there need to be that can make Sevan a tourist destination – in a word, we have a lot of good destinations, don't we? We have a lot of sites with a rich historical heritage – in a word, there is a lot of talk, a lot of talk, but nothing is being done. That's all I have to say.

#### 3. Female

Hello, I'd like to request something. The show was about theology or theosophy – something like that – and I was sitting and listening to it. When I was little, nobody would tell me anything about God, but I would say “One God has created us – God above, us below.” We knew that, and when we approached the Book, our grandfathers and grandmothers would not let us, saying “One can't just open the Word of God and read it.” But here we are discussing this on TV and talking about it this way and that – there is God above, and we are here. At the time when God went and created Christ, there was order... Did people have a television, radio or telephone? You're putting God on display through television... God is above, we are below. In the Soviet Union, people nevertheless worshipped God – those who believed worshipped. Those who did not believe could preach all they wanted – I knew that there is a God, He exists, He is above; I would go and light holy candles. Now why all this talk on television or on the radio? There is a God and those who know that understand this. There was a Russian school in Leninakan during Soviet times, which would face the Church.

They removed the Russian school so that the two churches face each other. Let me also tell you another story, listen to it. I was probably 18-20 years old in the 60s – I'm 70-something now. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of every month, the priests would knock on our doors and say prayers. We could give them money if we wanted to, or we could give nothing. On one of those occasions when they came to pray, they knocked on the door on the 6<sup>th</sup> of yet another month. I was getting ready to go to work and opened the door – it was a priest, he came in and said, “May I bless your home?” and I said, “Please do.” It was 1974 or 1975 back then; I was married and had a child. He came in and did his thing, he prayed... I'm a regular guy, I go to church once every couple of years or so, but I know one thing in my mind: God – whoever He is, wherever He comes from – he is there, he exists, you know?

4. Male

Those who... excuse me... those who criticize and so on and so forth, they don't know what they're doing... The situation these people are in – they're running away, fleeing... What are they thinking, what can they do? If they were good leaders, if they were to lead well, nobody would go away. They would stay and work, prosper at home... that's what it is, thank you.

5. Female

Hello, I am watching this TV program, they are discussing some post-election things right now on Yerkir Media, and the Republican party representative sitting there, who's saying “One can tell from your facial expression that you would not vote any other way”... tell him that it is shameful to say things like that, that it is quite clear from their own facial expression that they are tricking the people and they are – to put it bluntly – getting a kick out of it. Is that appropriate?

6. Male

I ask that we stop using that murderer Safarov's name, that we simply refer to him as a murderer. Heroes' names are always spoken, not murderers. Thank you.

7. Female

Hello, I am aski... I would like to ask a question to Mr. Sahakyan, let him reply to me, or rather, to the whole public. Why did Serzh Sargsyan consider it appropriate to visit Israel Hakopkokhyan when that man was on hunger strike, but does not consider it right to meet with Raffi Hovhannisian? That's all I wanted to ask. Thank you.

8. Female

Please do not equate in any way the vote of the people with the votes cast by Raffi Hovhannisian's followers. The people are not all standing at Raffi Hovhannisian's side, nobody has given that kind of support to them. Your studio is showing tendencies of late to stand with the opposition. Why?

## 9. Male

As far as the commissions are considered, one can say, from what I know, that the presidents of all the commissions are from the Republican Party. When the members or the observers, seeing violations, approach them, the situation is such that whatever we say does not work. The fact is that things are organized in such a way that one person, very often, cannot do anything. I propose... for example, why should the presidents in all the elections always be Republicans? If things are fair, then they should be distributed evenly, with equal votes. It says on paper that they have votes, but that doesn't count for anything. The elections will pass without violations if they can give the same rights and the same votes. Because the commission presidents are always Republicans, there are naturally no authorities, no police there until they are called, until they are told that they are speaking in such a way that nothing can be done. And this is how it will continue, it will go with the same flow. This is all, although one can say a lot more, but what should one say? Everything has been done, it's always the same elections – this much this time, that much that time. Thank you for listening.

## 10. Male

Hello, this is a citizen of Armenia. I am interested in one thing. When they say during election violations... for some parts of it there are observers, who have then said that they have not been any registered cases – and a certain part has naturally not registered any complaints with the law enforcement bodies. What makes you so sure that the people trust the law enforcement bodies? After all, these bodies are under your control, aren't they? So people don't go to them – part of them is scared, the other part does not trust them. Let them do a study – a survey even – and they will see what percentage of people trusts the law enforcement bodies. I think that is the reason that some people have registered complaints and then – for some reason – withdrawn them. Or, I don't know, they have said that no such thing had happened. Take me, for example – at this moment, nobody trusts anyone from the law enforcement bodies to the authorities, because people have lost that trust.

## 11. Female

I am a real patriot, I love my country, my people. I am amazed by their – what can I say? – their love for life, their progressive views. And let me say that I have never, ever been an oppositionist, and I am not an oppositionist now. But I live in this country and – you know what? – I was listening to the President's speech yesterday and I was wondering... Is it possible that they are not telling him that the people have it really rough? That 37% are below the poverty line, which is horrifying? He had written a letter to Serj Tankian that, yes, with his grandson they would become three Serzh, but there are thousands and tens of thousands of grandfathers who also have grandchildren. Perhaps their names are not Serzh and they go to bed hungry. Shouldn't their grandfathers complain, shouldn't they protest? Or on Facebook... it's amazing... I log in and there are people who are complaining. You know what? If they were provided for, they wouldn't complain so much – I mean if they had their daily bread provided. They write in Facebook that Serzh Sargsyan's nephew has gifted his wife a massive bouquet and the picture was there. It is apparently so big, that people are taking photographs of it. It costs millions – that's what was written. They are asking if it were not

better to give that money to ten orphanages, ten elderly homes, after all, wouldn't that be the more devout thing to do? And the people get disappointed in them. Also, all the boys of the Members of Parliament, their families... there are homes where there are three Members of Parliament from the same family. If the others... aren't there any other people in our nation who can become Members of Parliament, so that they are not from the same family, so that they don't all have the same opinion? Besides that, there are the ambassadors... all their brothers are ambassadors somewhere, not to mention their sons-in-law... And none of them come from good backgrounds or they haven't done anything for the people. An ambassador is the top person representing a country, after all...

12. Female

Hello, this is a lady of quite an elderly age speaking. Is there a need for so many TV programs, involving so many people, when the answer to the question is one – there will be a fair election only when the authorities want there to be one. Nothing else is needed, that's what I think.

13. Male

I want to ask a question. At least ask those people just once – what do they have to say about all the money that was distributed in the villages?

14. Male

What I want to say is that election violations definitely took place. I listened to Serzh Sargsyan's speech yesterday and I was very angry because there were many things in it that were not true. Are there no oligarchs in the government? If there aren't, how are they grabbing all that land and evicting people from their homes? People cannot make a living today, it is not possible to make a living. I would like to know one very important thing... Self-determination – is there such a thing, or isn't there? If there is, then they talk about how it was during the Communists, it was good that they built Armenia and – in a word – helped it prosper, develop... In that case, why were the villages already emptying out from 1970 up to 1980 even 1984-85? Armenia was being deprived of Armenians and can anyone tell me what the percentage of Turks in Armenia was – in the whole of Armenia – from 1970 to 1988? If there was self-determination, what dangers awaited our Armenia? That's one thing, the good deeds of the Communists. Secondly, I want to understand this – if our people are leaving the state, is there an indicator of some kind, that says that the country will not collapse, it won't be dissolved if even, say, only a 100 people remain here? Will the country not be dissolved? I need to understand whether Armenia is protected by the world, or do the Armenians not understand what awaits them after their state collapses? In my opinion, if the country is going to collapse, then I am convinced that no Armenians will be left in the whole world within 20-30 years. Thank you.

15. Male

Why doesn't the proxy have the right to count or protect his candidate's ballot papers? Or why aren't the commissions balanced? The majority of people in polling stations are professional falsifiers from different parties. The foreign observers have not been in place for the counting after 8 pm, or have only partly been there. And you are taking the opinion of those absent seriously?

16. Male

Hello, I watch your TV programs with a lot of interest, I listen to what is said and find it very interesting. But I would prefer everything to be worded more bluntly, because not everyone understands the polite language you are using. There is no need to reinvent anything, everything is quite clear. If the President says that the bribery is an evil in the country... and he said something else – was it bribery or crime? Then it is clear, all that is needed is to establish the rule of law and stand aside. Of course, crime and bribery are not necessarily a misfortune for the country – for some people it is a good thing, because criminals and people involved in bribery form the government. Let them come to the Shengavit district and see what was going on here during the elections. Let them take cameras, if they dare to come in the first place, and record what goes on. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, but I have my own comments. If 550,000 voters were to present themselves to Raffi Hovhannisian with their electoral bribes in hand as material evidence, the Constitutional Court would still need some document or other, or some other proof and it would not be able to prove anything. Everything is done with such arrogance that one should not have any expectations of the judicial bodies. I am an eyewitness – my fellow artist friends and art experts were put under pressure by the ..... Foundation, who has had a lot of success in our local judicial system, and despite having a myriad proofs, we could not achieve our goals even in the European Court. I can present that whole folder of documents and you will see what a system they have. What's the point of the Constitutional Court, of Mukuchyan... we gave them a thousand pieces of evidence to prove that a violation of rights had occurred in that Foundation, that they had done what they pleased and even the newspapers wrote about it. That is the kind of blunt case that you have to show, you know, because most of the people don't understand otherwise. You have to talk to them in this language - in the language of crime, the language of bribes. That is all, goodbye.

17. Male

Hello, this is an opera singer. I follow your programs closely... but I want to understand one thing. Everywhere, people are saying that there are no observers during the elections, that there were none for these elections... And so what if there aren't any observers? Does the Constitution in that case oblige one to allow violations, organize falsifications or steal votes? So there are no observers – so what? If there are no observers, must there always be... I understand, it becomes difficult to prove, but it is not mandatory to have votes stolen and falsified elections if there are no observers. I am of the conviction that in the civilized world, it is not mandatory to put guards everywhere in order to avoid theft, isn't that right? We are working with civilized people. And finally, why emphasize that

we are young, that we don't know enough, that we are a new republic, that we don't yet have the traditions of parliamentarism and what-not... If we have that much awareness, what is holding us back? If a mentally ill person – someone insane – sits down and analyzes his illness, would you believe that he is mentally ill? If we can talk about ourselves and say that we are new, that we are young and so on, what is preventing us from changing all that the next minute? Thank you.

**Religious Tolerance: “Christianity and Islam”, “Religion and Science”, “Church’s modernization”**

### **April 9 – April 23 broadcast**

18. Female

My message would be that a Muslim should not sit in front of our holiest of holy buildings – the Matenadaran – and praise his ideas... I don't know, that's one thing that shouldn't happen and the other is... fine, I'll mention the other some other time.

19. Female (continuation)

Well, I think they're not behaving as guests. In my whole life, I've never seen an Armenian lie on the grass, but they do that. The women spread their skirts and sit in the grass right next to the fountains on Republic Square. They don't behave like guests – our children don't have the possibility to live and breathe on our land, they're all abroad, and they come here and behave like they own the place. That is something that I for one cannot tolerate. Thank you.

20. Male

Excuse me, does someone like Jivan Gasparyan or any regular citizen have the right to take a copy of the Constitution to Serzh Sargsyan, and ask him to place his hand on it and take a vow – do we have that right? Can a regular citizen do something like that?

21. Female

I tuned in at the end and couldn't understand who that lady thought she was. You can't talk to a member of the clergy that way. People who are sinners avoid real faith and I guess she was one of them – someone who had committed many sins, but does not want to come around.

22. Male

The *Article 27* discussion just ended. I am a PhD candidate in Chemistry. I love nature, but I believe that religion is an enemy of man and humanity.

### 23. Female

Hello, I would like to state my opinion about yesterday's episode. Let those people participate who have read the Bible – I am referring to the DJ who was talking about believing without having read it. The believer is he who reads it, belief comes with reading. If she has a background in natural sciences and believes that we have evolved from chimpanzees, then there needs to be some proof. A birth or something over the past centuries that can prove that a chimpanzee can give birth to a human, a human who has been created by God – in His image and His likeness. So what if we talk about how the bodies of certain plants or animals are structured? Her education can prove 98 percent of that, but it all means nothing – after all, how can structure compare to the word of God? I could say a lot more, if... Well, I don't mean talk a lot more... In a word, don't invite the kind of guests to the program who take us in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

### 24. Female

What I wanted to say that it is very mandatory in schools to read, get an education and get to know Jesus. The Bible should be taught by educated people, like priests, who have studied for a number of years, graduated from academies... I don't know, I don't mean to philosophize, but if we look around us to see who believes, then we can see that they are protected like the lambs of God. When I mention Sodom and Gomorrah, what I mean is that children don't know about it - they don't read the Bible and don't know why Sodom and Gomorrah happened. They think that they are animals, that they have to live for today without caring about what happens tomorrow, even if means Sodom and Gomorrah tomorrow, or burning away, fading away... But if they read the Bible, if they are taught, if they are filled with belief – and I repeat again, reading will develop belief – they will be protected. Each boy is not protected now – I see how they go to school, there are boys standing at the walls, waiting for them... their parents take them, if there are no parents, those boys take them... You can't suddenly pick up a piece of science and say that this explains the origins of mankind... No, God created Man Himself, in His own likeness, His image... we can talk about whatever studies and prove that belief is something else... That is why we don't need any other scientific subjects, we just need belief in God. Thank you.

### 25. Male

I wanted to ask one question. Was that person born from a monkey to deny that God had created her? And for her to feel no sense of shame... God created Man, and Man enjoys all the bounties on the Earth and in Heaven. How can that half-blind woman deny this - that girl, who denies the God who created her. Indeed, it is that kind of person who has been born of monkeys.

### 26. Female

I'm watching the program right now and I would really like to know that doctor's name. To be honest, I don't know the right words to use, but I would really ask them not to try and spread their personal opinion to the general public through television, because it is very wrong. First, we are the

first nation to accept Christianity and we should support this idea, not speak out against it. It is very unpleasant for me to hear that many young people – indeed many of them might hear this – might go down the wrong path because of this. They need to read more about our roots – a tree is nurtured through its roots. So the further our nation goes towards its roots, the more united we are, the more peace there will be. So all of this is really not favorable to our nation and to peace.

27. Female

I am calling you on Tuesday regarding the program on your channel discussing the modernization of the Church. Our people accepted Christianity as the state religion more than 1700 years ago. Christianity is not a religious organization, it is a way of life with a moral foundation. Those people who do not participate in the Church's ceremonies should not be given the right to speak about the modernization of the Church. The Church is not a piece of clothing that you adapt to fashion. Please tell Doctor Torosyan, that one servant cannot serve two lords – he either serves God, or he serves Mammon.