



NEWS RELEASE

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Armenia's International Community to Honour Rights Advocates

Yerevan, Armenia – The U.S. Embassy, Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, British Embassy, OSCE Office in Yerevan, Council of Europe Office in Yerevan and the United Nations Armenia Office honoured individuals working to promote human rights, accountable governance, local government reform, and free speech in Armenia at the Universal Rights Awards Ceremony at the Congress Hotel in Yerevan. Since 2012, the Universal Rights Awards Ceremony was the first multi-mission initiative to highlight the contributions of Armenia's civil rights activists, government officials, and media and civil society representatives to the promotion of human rights. Armenian government officials, foreign diplomats, NGO representatives, and the press attended the event.

Ambassador Andrey Sorokin, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, presented "Freedom Defender" award to Shushan Doydoyan, President of Freedom of Information Centre. "A long time partner of the OSCE, Shushan has been a tireless defender of human rights and fundamental freedoms. My Office appreciates Ms. Doydoyan's commitment toward the promotion of open, transparent and accountable governance as well as her efforts to establish alternative mechanisms for resolving media-related disputes".

Dirk Lorenz, Chargé d'Affaires of the EU Delegation to Armenia awarded the "Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women" with the Woman of Courage Award. "The European Union commends the efforts of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women in recognition of courageous advocacy for protection of the rights of women and their assistance for victims of domestic violence in Armenia", said Mr. Lorenz.

The British Ambassador to Armenia, Kathy Leach, awarded Zaruhi Mejlumyan the Media Excellence award. "Journalists play a crucial role in exposing the failures of justice systems all around the world. Some journalists are in fact campaigners – actively, consciously and deliberately exposing injustices, righting wrongs, raising awareness, helping individuals and pointing out systemic problems. I am delighted to announce that the Media Excellence Award this year goes to Zaruhi Mejlumyan in recognition of her outstanding professionalism and commitment in writing about, and defending the human rights of, prisoners facing life sentences."

H.E. Richard Mills, Ambassador of the United States of America gave the Government Reformer Award to the Anti-trafficking Working Group (IAWG). "Congratulations to the IAWG, which is this year's recipient of the Universal rights Award for Government Reformer. The IAWG is made up of dedicated professionals who contribute to counter-TIP activities and cooperation between the Government of Armenia and civil society through programs to prevent TIP crimes, provide assistance to victims, prosecute traffickers, and build partnerships. The IAWG represents the best of government –civil society cooperation,

and its impressive results demonstrate that when government and civil society work together and listen to each other, they are more effective agents of change", said H.E. Mills.

The Head of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan, Mrs Natalia Voutova, awarded Mr Artsruni Igityan, mayor of Akhuryan village, with the "Local Government Reformer" award. "Under Mr Igityan's creative and environmentally conscious leadership, Akhuryan community became a healthier and friendlier place to live - a place, where the social rights of citizens are better protected and promoted", said Mrs Voutova.

United Nations Resident Coordinator, Bradley Busetto presented the Promoting Inclusion award to Armen Alaverdyan, the Executive Director of Unison NGO. "Mr. Alaverdyan has pioneered the improvement of services to persons with disabilities in Armenia. His work has led to the integration of persons with disabilities in social, economic and cultural life. To name but a few examples, he improved the accessibility of Yerevan by adapting city buses and building ramps, created employment opportunities for dozens of persons with disabilities and was also among the first to initiate the independent living movement in Armenia." said Mr. Busetto.