**Republic of Armenia**

**INFORMATION**

**WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE RESOLUTION ON “NEW AND EMERGING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS”**

**(THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA)**

* ***How do technical standards for new and emerging digital technologies impact the enjoyment of human rights; what are related risks and opportunities?***

Rapid development of technologies brings new opportunities along with new challenges. Today it is essential to identify and manage the effects and consequences of the use of new and emerging technologies and ensure their responsible and accountable application.

Emerging and new digital technologies can transform the possibilities of persons for a more effective enjoyment and protection of their human rights, and have better access to certain services, such as public services (education, health, pensions, etc.). New digital technologies provide better access to public services, and create an atmosphere of equal opportunities for all. Advances in digital technologies have also played a significant role in the attempts to reduce poverty, infant and maternal mortality, achieve literacy, promote gender equality, etc.

Digital technologies have also played an important part in improving access to information, have ensured connectivity globally, which in its turn has resulted in better protection and guaranteeing of human rights, and have also contributed to the advancement of open, transparent, and democratic societies. Technological advances, including digital tools and platforms, can be also used as an early warning mechanism to identify risk factors and early signs of genocide, prevent violence and conflict and generate incentives for positive changes in the societies, as well as recovery and reconciliation.

However, misuse of advanced technologies and the information they provide can be leveraged, among others, to amplify hate speech, incite violence, facilitate terrorist recruitment, perpetrate genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, posing threat to international peace and security. Also, if left unregulated, unmonitored and unsupervised, without specific technical standards, new and emerging technologies can have a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights, and in certain cases may lead to gross violations; for example, in the case of Armenia, modern technologies have been used against the relatives of persons who were missing (enforced disappeared) as a result of the 44-day war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2020 and the Azerbaijani military attack on Armenia in September 2022.

In particular, more than 200 Armenian servicemen and civilians are still considered missing as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression. Both during the 44-day war and the September 2022 military attack, Azerbaijani users of social media platforms have either abused parents or relatives of missing persons searching for them by making inquiries in various social media platforms, or have posted that they know the location or the burial place of Armenian servicemen. Azerbaijani users have asked the parents or relatives of the missing persons to send them pictures of their identity cards or passport to prove they are actually related to the missing person in question. In certain cases, this was followed by the relatives of the servicemen to establish contact.

Through these methods, Azerbaijani users of social media platforms have further insulted the parents and family members of the missing persons, answering them with comments like “worms are eating his body. He is buried in Kalbajar” (Karvajar region in Nagorno-Karabakh), “these ugly Gypsy and Lom people have died. The parents of these bastards may get in touch with me. I know the location where the dead bodies are buried”. Furthermore, Azerbaijani users shared this information on Azerbaijani channels and received the praise and amusement of their other compatriots. In certain cases, Azerbaijani servicemen have confiscated the phones of Armenian servicemen, called their parents, and used the personal social media accounts of the Armenian servicemen, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, to post publications. In a specific case, Azerbaijani servicemen killed an Armenian serviceman, took a picture and filmed a video, sent it to his wife, and posted it on WhatsApp’s story section.

Moreover, Azerbaijani social media users have created stickers and GIFs depicting the tortured bodies and body parts of Armenian servicepersons and civilians on one of the social networks, which were uploaded and used by tens of thousands of Azerbaijani users.

These actions by Azerbaijani users have caused further psychological suffering to the parents and relatives of the missing persons, and have increased traumas in the Armenian society. Furthermore, the above-mentioned methods have also been used as a means to continuously terrorize ethnic Armenians, deprive them of a sense of security, disrupt their normal life, and violate their human rights in general.

Technical standards for new and emerging technologies should have in them the existing international framework of human rights, to ensure that the negative aspects of technologies do not outnumber the positive aspects, such as access to information and the formation of a transparent, open and democratic society. At the same time, the current human rights paradigm should be constantly developed, revised, and updated, to ensure it keeps pace with technological developments, and to ensure human rights requirements are protected and guaranteed.

* ***What are examples that best illustrate the relationship between technical standards for new and emerging digital technologies and human rights?***

Data collection is one of the biggest challenges to privacy rights in the digital age. Internet companies collect vast amounts of data about their users. Another challenge to privacy rights is online harassment. Due to the anonymity of the Internet, people can say or do things that they would never have done in person. This can include threats of violence, sexual harassment, cyber bullying, and other cyber attacks. Victims of online harassment often have difficulty of getting the perpetrators to stop as it is almost impossible to identify them.

* ***What are the duties and responsibilities of standard setting organizations and their stakeholders in effectively integrating human rights considerations in technical standard-setting processes for new and emerging digital technologies?***

Human rights aspects should be duly integrated in technical standard-setting processes for new and emerging technologies.

For example, in accordance with the law of the Republic of Armenia "On Protection of Personal Data" any data processor is obliged to undertake organizational and technical measures to ensure the security of personal data in the information systems managed by him.

* ***Which standard-setting processes and organizations are particularly relevant for safeguarding and promoting human rights in the context of new and emerging digital technologies?***

In the Republic of Armenia, the Agency for Protection of Personal Data of the Ministry of Justice is the authorized body, which in case of violation of the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On protection of personal data" is responsible for imposing administrative sanctions established in accordance with the law or a jurisdictional settlement and ensuring the protection of the rights of those involved in relationships regarding the circulation of personal data.

* ***What are common obstacles to effectively integrating human rights considerations in technical standard-setting processes for new and emerging digital technologies?***

Among such obstacles are cyber security and a low level of public awareness. The Armenian Government has identified among its strategic goals the reform of the sphere of information security and cyber security and the improvement of the legislative field in order to effectively implement measures for monitoring, analysis, information counteraction and combating information threats and challenges.

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