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**EXTRACT FROM THE EXPERT JUDGMENT
OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY
ON COMPLAINT BY CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE AGAINST
SHAMSHYAN.COM WEBSITE**

Civil Society Institute filed a complaint to Media Ethics Observatory (MEO) against piece “Road Police Caught a Thief Who Stole Food from SAS Supermarket: Among Chasers Was Namesake of the Owner of SAS. PHOTOS AND VIDEO FOOTAGE”, published on Shamshyan.com on February 8, 2015.

MEO believes that the Civil Society Institute is an appropriate applicant, as a public organization which deals with protection of human rights, and monitors how the media adhere to professional ethics in covering this issue.

Gagik Shamshyan, editor of Shamshyan.am and photo journalist, did not object to the review of the complaint by MEO and rendering of professional opinion.

The MEO examined the complaint on April 2, 2015 session and came to the following conclusion:

1. In the disputed piece (the author of the photos and the video footage is Levon Amirzyan who, according to Gagik Shamshyan, happened to be in the scene by chance) incident with a person, detained on suspicion of theft, is presented as already a proven crime. In addition, the article gives his name, surname, place of residence, that is, data that identifies the individual.

2. MEO finds that publication of personal data and reporting of the incident as though it was a proven crime violates the presumption of innocence and the Paragraph 4.5 of the Code of Conduct of Media Representatives (“To respect the presumption of innocence: when publishing the names of crime suspects before the trial, to consider the public need for doing so - striking a balance between the presumption of innocence, the right of crime suspects to fair trial, and the right of the public to be informed”).

3. MEO reminds that non-interference to private life is one of the founding principles of journalistic ethics. Based on Paragraph 4.1 of the Code of

Conduct of Media Representatives (“To respect and to protect the human right to private life: only public interest can justify interferences with the privacy of officials, public figures, and individuals aspiring to the power or public attention”), the MEO find that interference to private life which took place in the piece cannot be justified by prevailing public necessity: the suspect is not a public figure or a person seeking public attention.

4. MEO also reminds about the Principle 8 provided by Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2003)13 of the CE Committee of Ministers to member states on the provision of information through the media in relation to criminal proceedings: “The provision of information about suspects, accused or convicted persons or other parties to criminal proceedings should respect their right to protection of privacy in accordance with Article 8 of the Convention. Particular protection should be given to parties who are minors or other vulnerable persons, as well as to victims, to witnesses and to the families of suspects, accused and convicted. In all cases, particular consideration should be given to the harmful effect which the disclosure of information enabling their identification may have on the persons referred to in this Principle.”

Given the attention and interest of wide audience to crime news, MEO urges Shamshyan.com website and other colleagues to adhere to common ethical norms in the preparation of such materials, without upsetting the balance between the public's right to information and the obligation to respect the principle of presumption of innocence.

***Adopted at the MEO session of April 2, 2015,
In the following composition:***

Gegham BAGHDASARIAN, Chief Editor of “Analyticon” magazine

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Mesrop HARUTYUNIAN, Media Expert

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Gegham VARDANIAN, Producer of Media.am

[Media Ethics Observatory](#) was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 48 as of today. In its judgments MEO is guided by Code of Conduct of Media Representatives, adopted at the self-regulation body's meeting on March 10, 2007.