



BM73 – Jerusalem

Resolution: Call for stand with Armenian students in preventing the law on mandatory military service for students

On 29th of November 2017, the President of Republic of Armenia signed the new law "On Military Duty and Military Service" which significantly alters the current practice of allowing young men to postpone their mandatory two years of military service while entering the university. Previously, male students with high admission grades were granted a governmental scholarship and the right to deferment until they will finish their studies.

According to the new law, students may receive deferment right after signing a contract with the Defense Ministry. Such contracts require that the student attends military classes each Saturday alongside their university studies. Furthermore, they are obliged to serve for three years after graduation in a location and under conditions determined by the Ministry. Otherwise, students are conscripted into the army for compulsory service for 2 years at the age of 18 despite their enrollment in studies with/without a governmental scholarship, academic degree, specialty and other circumstances (except health and family conditions).

Unfortunately, adoption of this bill has not been preceded by appropriate research stakeholders and experts have not been consulted. The bill was adopted in an unexpected and rapid way, without government-led research on the impact of this reform on the higher education and society. A strike by hundreds of students from different universities followed the prior adoption of the draft version of the law. The minister of Defense rejected the demand to reconsider the proposed legislation and urged the young activists to end the strike. Moreover, students attending the strike were threatened with low grades and prohibition of free education at some universities. This kind of repression against the academic community and the students' voice is to be regarded as a direct threat towards academic freedom.

After several days of strike and hunger strike, students were suggested to get involved in roundtable discussions on their demands and what they think needs to be changed. Several meetings have been held where students genuinely presented their concerns and anxiety constructively highlighting how this new

bill would disturb the lifelong learning opportunities.

Nevertheless, the law has been adopted with the highest approval of the President and the students of Armenia are still not satisfied. We are worried whether the further regulatory acts under this bill will satisfy our demand for providing the deferment right to male students enrolled in higher education.

ANSA is particularly concerned about the impact of a new law on male students' motivation and engagement in higher education and science. It would have a significant impact on the higher education system, affect further development of the civic society, decrease the prosperity of science and economy consequently. The European Students' Union commits its solidarity and stands together with Armenian National Students' Association in the demand of legitimate procedures for adopting laws and regulations to be in place, as well as for securing the freedom of speech in society.

Proposed by: ANSA

Seconded by: UAS, NUS-UK, VVS, ŠKRVS, LSVb, BOSS, EC, BSA, LIS, PSRP