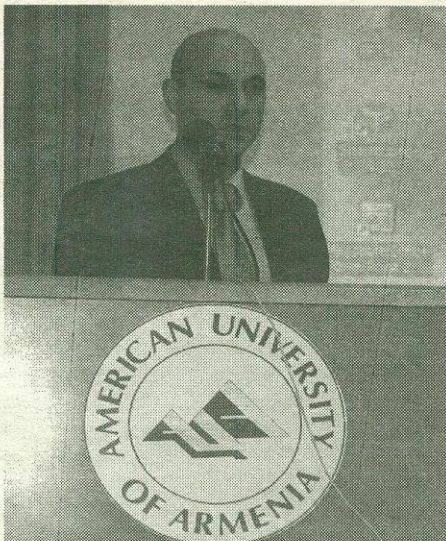


Youth Forum

Public Lecture at AUA Law Department



David Sandukhchyan, Head of the legal service of the "Internews" Media Support NGO.

YEREVAN — The American University of Armenia (AUA) Department of Law, in partnership with the NGO "Internews" Media Support, hosted a public lecture by David Sandukhchyan (attorney, head of the legal service of the "Internews" Media Support NGO), entitled "Current issues of legal regulation of mass media" on Saturday, April 29, 2006.

Mr. Sandukhchyan discussed the impact of current media legislation on freedom of speech in Armenia. He commented that, "According to PACE resolutions and reports of international media freedom organizations, the basic problem is the lack of the full independence of the broadcasting regulatory body. The television and radio regulatory body is formed of top political officials of the country through non-transparent

procedures and, therefore, cannot be fully independent and neutral. Parallel with other deficiencies of the broadcasting legislation, the absence of political neutrality of the regulatory authority negatively affects the freedom of the broadcasting media in Armenia."

The aim of the lecture was to raise media awareness about current legal protections for Armenian journalists and the regulation of mass media activities in general. Topics included the independence of TV and radio companies; legislative guarantees of the Mass Media independence from state authorities; protection of media professionals against imperfect legislation; and the inadequate application of current legislation.

Mr. Sandukhchyan concluded with his view of the primary issue of Armenian media legislation and enforcement; i.e., the lack of a provision in the ROA Law on TV and Radio that guarantees broadcasting media independence from political authorities. He noted, however, that there is room in the criminal, civil and administrative legislation to develop efficient protection of journalists' professional rights. "The main problem... is the lack of enforcement of the legislation protecting the media professionals. Despite a number of violent acts against journalists that took place during the last three years, the relevant article of the Criminal Code was applied by the Armenian courts only once. None of the cases of violence against journalists by the police [were] disclosed and no... law enforcement authority was panelized," Sandukhchyan stated.

The event was free and open to the public. Students, representatives from international and local NGOs, and the representatives of media attended the lecture.