Representation of Minorities in the Media in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey

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"No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive."

Mahatma Gandhi

The current international system of nation-states, established following World War Two, has created a solid ground for ethnically-framed conflicts. The institutions of the nation-states have played a critical role in making ethnicity one of the politically salient identities. Among others, these institutions are mandatory education, national armies, and the media. In this paper, we examine the role of one of these institutions – the media, with regards to shaping intergroup relations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, and more specifically the representation of ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups in the media of these countries. Beyond reporting on the general situation in this regard, the paper also draws comparative conclusions and offers recommendations to various actors in furtherance of inclusive intergroup relations, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence in these countries.

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Introduction

The discourse of the nation-state goes back to the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century. The nation-state is a modern form of the state where the territorial delineation of a country has a claim to coincide with a culturally and ethnically homogenous population (Gellner 1983 (2006)). As a result, the "design" of the nation-state features a dominant group, emphasizing its characteristics as overarching. The current international system, largely based on the logic of nation-states, has politicized culture and ethnicity and, as a result, has been struggling with the elaboration of proper strategies for the management of ethnic and cultural diversity. Although, most of the countries recognized by the United Nations (UN) currently claim democracy as the form of their governance, where all citizens, regardless of their various identities, enjoy the same rights, in practice, this is not necessarily the case. Segregation, discrimination, social exclusion, injustice, and the improper allocation of resources happens on a daily basis and creates violent conflict.

There are ongoing theoretical discussions around governmental policies for the better management of ethnic and cultural diversity. A conventional form of diversity management is **assimilation**, when the dominant group tries to make minority of "its like" (Rodríguez-García 2010). While assimilation is largely discredited as a policy choice theoretically, it is still applied in many countries practically. **Multiculturalism**, on the other hand, embraces diversity based on social justice and equality, at the same time giving a "cultural autonomy" to the minority groups (Rosado 1997). However, due to its theoretical criticism and practical failure to bring about a peaceful cohabitation of different groups in some countries, a new model has been formulated, called "interculturalism". **Interculturalism** shares the same values and principles with multiculturalism, but it also emphasizes the importance of an "interactive process" in a diverse society, where the majority does not simply accept other groups and treat them as equals, but also engages with them, is aware of their culture, and respects exchanges among these groups (Zapata-Barrero 2017). Interculturalism assumes the same type of interaction among all groups; as a matter of fact, it emphasizes interaction between members of diverse communities, rather than "groupism".

Besides the governments, other societal actors also play an important role in the management of diversity. Beyond doubt, one of them is the media, a key public

opinion-maker. For the interculturalist approach, the media is a tool for building a society where different groups know about each other as a starting point. Further, it can facilitate "intercultural dialogue", raise awareness, and build the "intercultural abilities" of each member of the society, thus contributing to social cohesion and, ultimately, a well-integrated society. However, often media actors, incompetently or purposefully become instruments and sources of discrimination, polarization, and circulation of stereotypes against minorities or vulnerable groups. Hate speech and discriminatory language in mainstream media can be the key hindering element of societal integration or cohesion.

The South Caucasus countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia – and Turkey face significant challenges in diversity management. At the level of state documents and declarative statements by many state and media actors, all these countries do respect diversity and are also "proud" of it. However, in practice, the situation is different. All four countries have experienced conflicts that allegedly derive from improper diversity management as well as a massive polarization within the society. Considering this link between diversity management and conflict as well as the role of the media as a "social broker", we aim to analyze the representation of ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups in the media of these four countries.

This paper starts off summarizing the existing international and national media standards for reporting on minorities. This is followed by a section on the methodology used for sampling, monitoring, data collection, and analysis. Then, the findings of the analysis on the four countries is provided. In the concluding sections, the findings are compared and recommendations are made for all stakeholders to take into consideration for overcoming the problems related to the representation of minorities and vulnerable groups in the media.

International and National Standards of Media Reporting on Minorities

In order to lay a basis for the discussion of the representation of minorities and vulnerable groups in the media of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, a discussion of the national and international standards on such representation is due. All four countries claim democracy as the form of their governance, and their constitutions protect the freedom of speech, expression, and the media. All of them are members of the UN as well as regional organizations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – all structures that entail responsibilities and standards to live up to both in democracy and freedom of expression.

International Standards

A number of important international documents exist on media standards that also include specific, albeit non-binding, guidelines for reporting on minority issues. One of the oldest universal documents is the "Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists" adopted by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in 1954. Principle 7 of this document stipulates:

> "The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins" (International Federation of Journalists 1954).

The CoE Parliamentary Assembly passed an important recommendation in 1995 urging member state governments to take adequate measures for ensuring a better representation of migrants and ethnic minorities in the media (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly 1995). Based on this document, the CoE Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation N R (1997) 21 to member states on the media and the promotion of a culture of tolerance. This document outlines specific standards for media organizations on proper reporting on minority issues (Recommendation N R (1997) 21 of the Committee of Ministers

to Member States on the Media and the Promotion of a Culture of Tolerance 1997).

Further on, the OSCE has also developed a tool for media self-regulation with specific recommendations on minorities. The "Media Self-Regulation Guidebook" declares that a code widely approved nationwide may serve as the main source for various types of individual codes, and that a national code of ethics can reflect "different sensitivities within every society, based on the nature of democracy and on the social-cultural-ethnic-religious codes of conduct". Yet, it also underlines that what matters is the commitment of each media outlet to its own standards, and that "true ethics standards can be created only by independent media professionals, and can be obeyed by them only voluntarily" (OSCE Representative of Freedom of Media 2008).

National Standards

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey have also adopted national standards of media reporting that include the representation of minorities as well.

In Armenia, Article 29 of the Constitution prohibits "discrimination based on sex, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances". Article 42 of the Constitution prohibits the "incitement of national, racial, and religious hatred and the propaganda of violence". The Constitution also establishes the right to "seek, receive, and disseminate information" (Constitution of Armenia 1995 (2015)).

Article 22 of the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting prohibits the use of radio and television for "inciting ethnic, racial, and religious animosity". By Article 26 of the same law, the Public Television and Radio Company "is obliged to provide the audience with programs that consider the interests of ethnic minorities, different social groups and different regions of Armenia", and it "must provide airtime for the ethnic minorities in their languages[1]" (The

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[1] The existing legislative provisions on public radio and television do not guarantee a *minimum* time for broadcasting in minority languages. Instead, the total duration of such programs is set *not to exceed* two hours per week on television and an hour per week on the radio (The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Television and Radio

Law of the Republic of Armenia on Television and Radio Broadcasting 2000 (2017)).

In Armenia, some media outlets have also elaborated mechanisms of self-regulation. The first attempt at self-regulation of the media in Armenia was the "Code of Conduct" for the members of the Yerevan Press Club adopted in 1995 (Melikyan, et al. 2013). Later, other media outlets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) developed individual and group codes such as the "Code of Ethics" of the Media Initiatives Center[2] (MediaInitiatives.am n.d.) and the "Code of Ethics" of the "Investigative Journalists" NGO (Hetq.am 2002). In 2007, by the initiative of the Yerevan Press Club, 18 media outlets and NGOs signed a joint "Code of Ethics" and formed a body called the Media Ethics Observatory. Signed by 44 media outlets as of today, this code specifically stipulates that editors and journalists are obliged "not to promote in any way ethnic or religious hatred and intolerance, or any discrimination on political, social, sexual, and language grounds" as well as to "exclude hate speech" (Ypc.am 2007 (2015)).

In Azerbaijan, Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees equality "irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, origin, property status, social position, convictions, political party, trade union organization and social unity affiliation" and prohibits limitation of rights based on "race, ethnicity, social status, language, origin, convictions and religion". Article 50 of the Constitution guarantees the freedom of mass media and prohibits state censorship (Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan 1995 (2016)).

Article 7 of the Law on Mass Media, further guarantees the freedom of information and confirms the inadmissibility of censorship (The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Mass Media 1999 (2002)). Public broadcasting is regulated by the Law on Public Television and Radio Broadcasting. Article 32 of the law prohibits the propaganda of "violence, cruelty, religious and racial

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Broadcasting 2000 (2017)). Currently, only the public radio has programs in minority languages, while Armenian public television does not produce programming in minority languages except for some films in Russian with Armenian subtitles (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2017).

[2] The organization used to be called Internews Media Support.

discrimination". (The Law of Azerbaijan Republic on Public TV-Radio Broadcasting 2002).

However, the media landscape in the country is seen as restrictive according to the reports by several international organizations (Azerbaijan. Freedom of the Press 2016 2016) (Human Rights Watch 2016) (Irex.org 2017). The restrictive environment of the media has had consequences for the functionality of the self-regulatory mechanisms.

In the field of self-regulation, the Press Council in conjunction with the OSCE's Baku office, developed the "Code of Professional Ethics for Journalists of Azerbaijan" in 2003 that among other things declares that "journalists shall not condemn people for their nationality, race, sex, language, profession, religion, and place of birth or residence and shall not highlight such data" (Code of Professional Ethics for Journalists of Azerbaijan 2003). The Press Council itself is deemed a crucial self-regulatory mechanism. Established in 2003 at the first Congress of Journalists of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Press Council is meant to be an independent organ ensuring public control over the respect of the "Code of Professional Ethics for Journalists" (Mass Media in Azerbaijan 2017). Yet, it has been criticized for dependence and affiliation with the government and not standing up for the rights of media outlets and journalists (Irex.org 2017).

In Georgia, similar to Armenia and Azerbaijan, Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality "regardless of race, color of skin, language, sex, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic and social affiliation, origin, property or social status, place of residence". Anti-discrimination is framed in Article 38 as allowing citizens of Georgia "to develop their culture freely, use their mother tongue in private and in public, without any discrimination and interference". The freedom of speech and mass media are protected by the Constitution as well through Articles 19 and 24 (Constitution of Georgia 1995 (2013)). However, there are a number of cases when this right can be limited, in particular when there is "public incitement to acts of violence [...] in order to cause a discord between certain groups based on their racial, religious, national, provincial, ethnic, social, political, linguistic" characteristics (Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 239).

There are additional regulatory mechanisms obliging the media to follow standards of reporting on minority and diversity issues. Article 56 of the Georgian Law on Broadcasting prohibits "broadcasting of programs containing

the apparent and direct threat of inciting racial, ethnic, religious or other hatred in any form and the threat of encouraging discrimination or violence toward any group". It further prohibits discrimination based on "disability, ethnic origin, religion, opinion, gender, sexual orientation or on the basis of any other feature or status" or "highlight[ing] this feature or status […] except when this is necessary due to the content of a program and when it is targeted to illustrate existing hatred" (Law of Georgia on Broadcasting 2004 (2017)).

Furthermore, the Georgian National Commission of Communications developed the "Code of Conduct of Broadcasters". Articles 31, 32, and 33 set standards for reporting on "diversity, equality and tolerance" including refraining from the publication of any material inciting hatred, stereotypes, or intolerance towards ethnic origin or based on other criteria; insulting any ethnic group; drawing unjustified parallels between ethnic origin and negative events; and mentioning ethnicity unless there is a "necessity" to do so (Georgian National Commission of Communications 2009).

The third mechanism is a self-regulatory one designed by an independent body of journalists. The "Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics", currently signed by 280 journalists, has mechanisms for appeal by individuals or legal entities. The Charter establishes 11 guiding principles for the signatory journalists. Principle 7 warns the journalists against the dangers of encouraging discrimination in the media (Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics 2009).

Article 10 of the Constitution of Turkey guarantees equality "without distinction as to language, race, color, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such grounds". Article 26 guarantees the freedom of expression, and Article 28 guarantees the freedom of press (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey 1982 (2010)). Turkey has no legal provisions against hate speech. On the other hand, Article 216 of the Criminal Code, without naming and defining hate speech or hate crime as a concept, aims to prevent attacks against any group on the basis of social class, race, religion, or sectarian or regional difference (Criminal Code 2004). However, even though the minority groups increasingly tried to appeal to this to address the violation of their rights, the article continues to be used primarily as an instrument of limiting the freedom of speech. It sets the legal basis for sentencing journalists and other commentators for political purposes without providing protection to minorities (Turkey. Freedom of the Press 2016 2016).

There are also a number of ethics codes published by several civil society initiatives in Turkey that include provisions for the coverage of minority groups. The most prominent among them are the "Code of Professional Ethics of the Press" published in 1989 by the Press Council, the "Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities of Turkish Journalists" issued by the Journalists Association of Turkey in 1988, and the "Ethics Code for Journalists" adopted in 2011 by the Media Association (UNESCO 2014, Journalists Association of Turkey 1988). However, the main shortcoming of these codes is that they do not have any power of enforcement. Thus, the problems in the implementation process of these codes continue.

To date, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey do not have comprehensive national legislation dealing with hate speech, and their criminal, civil, and administrative laws remain deficient in dealing with the issue. Georgia is making certain steps in this direction, and the "Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination" was adopted and entered into force in 2014 (ECRI Report on Turkey 2016, ECRI Report on Armenia 2016, ECRI Report on Georgia 2016, ECRI Report on Azerbaijan 2016).

Monitoring Methodology

The aim of this paper is to compare the representation of minorities and vulnerable groups in the media of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. To conduct this media monitoring, we relied primarily on content analysis (Neuendorf 2002) and to a lesser degree on critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Van Dijk 1995). In each country, we selected at least three online media outlets, chose random dates for the monitoring, and analyzed news articles and opinion columns that contained keywords pre-determined by the co-authors (detailed in Annex 1).

Only electronic media outlets were selected for monitoring. Supported by social media, the electronic media outlets have become more popular than the print media during the last decades, particularly in the South Caucasus. Although print media preserves its popularity in Turkey, the comparative nature of this research and the need to align methodologies led us to the choice of electronic outlets for Turkey as well.

The media outlets examined in each country were selected based on these criteria:

- Popularity: The popularity of outlets was determined through Alexa.com (The Top 500 Sites on the Web. By Country 2017) and supported by other data whenever necessary and possible.
- Ownership: If more than one popular outlets belong to the same company, we selected the next most popular outlet.
- Accessibility of archives: When the archives of the popular outlets were not accessible online, we selected the next most popular outlet.
- Number: We analyzed at least three outlets for each country. We added more outlets when we thought the research was not conclusive.
- Content: We did not consider the outlets that publish items exclusively related to entertainment, sports, or advertisement.

The period for the analysis was randomized. As a base rule, we analyzed media materials published on the first Tuesday of each month between June and December 2016. Whenever the research was not conclusive because of insufficient coverage, the monitoring period was extended.

The greatest challenge of the research was to determine the selection criteria for the groups to be analyzed. The gravity of the challenge derived not only from finding common criteria to employ for all four countries but also from the very definition of minority – a very disputed concept that may encompass various meanings.

Jennifer Jackson Preece argues that since the end of World War One, the theoretical and legal scholarship and the accompanying practices have used the criterion of citizenship as a distinguishing factor between minorities and similar non-citizen groups such as immigrants, refugees or asylum-seekers, and a different body of theoretical and legal scholarship has developed for the latter groups. She, therefore, defines "minority" as essentially identical to "nation" and quotes Hugh Seton-Watson's definition of "nation" as "a community of people who share certain characteristics". Minorities are thus "ethnonations who […] exist within the political boundaries of some other nation's state" (Preece 1998, 28-29). However, she offers to underline the distinction between citizen and non-citizen groups by the term "national minorities" that she defines as:

> "a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, well defined and historically established on the territory of that state, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural characteristics differing

from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language" (Preece 1998, 29).

This definition captures the current understanding of "national minority" very well; however, more than a numerical relationship with a majority, the concept of minority often denotes an unequal power relationship (Galbreath and McEvoy 2012, Balibar 1991). Louise Wirth offers a sociological conception of a minority that concentrates on power and problematizes discrimination:

"We may define a minority as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. The existence of a minority in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group with higher social status and greater privileges. Minority carries with it the exclusion from full participation in the life of the society" (Wirth 1945).

Consequently, we decided to analyze at least one group for each country that fits the definition of "national minority". We further developed the criteria of size, assumed conflict potential, and rights deprivation as our research question is built on the media dimension of the link between minorities and conflict. So, we selected local Yezidis in Armenia; local Lezgis in Azerbaijan; local Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Russians, Ossetians, Abkhazians, Kists/Chechens, the Roma, Assyrians, Udis, and Avars in Georgia; and finally, local Kurds in Turkey for the monitoring and analysis.

In Armenia and Turkey, we also analyzed the representation of Syrian refugees in the media. Similarly, in Azerbaijan, we analyzed the representation of displaced persons (as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) in the media. We are well aware that none of these groups are considered national minorities, especially since refugees in Armenia and displaced persons in Azerbaijan are considered to have the same ethnicity with the dominant population. Yet, their situation in the society carries a certain degree of resemblance with the minorities we analyzed in terms of size, assumed conflict potential, and rights deprivation. Therefore, they fit the sociological understanding of the concept of minorities. Moreover, the novelty and the urgency of the conflicts they are associated with create curiosity for the comparison of their representation with the other groups and between the countries. However, we continue to use the

term "minority" for the first category, and we use the term "group" for the second category throughout the paper in order to avoid confusions.

During the data collection phase, we paid attention to aspects such as the main topic and content of the media items, quotations or references, adjectives and metaphors for naming and describing groups, positive or negative attributions, numbers and statistics. The findings were documented through a data template. We also analyzed the media items for hate speech. The CoE definition of hate speech was employed in this research[3].

Main Findings

This section reflects the main findings of the media analysis for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. For each country, we first present general information about the media environment, the background information about the analyzed media outlets and groups, followed by the main findings of the analysis.

Armenia

The Media Environment in Armenia

Media digitization in Armenia in the 2000s has surely increased the diversity of media outlets and the plurality of opinions. Yet legislation remains flawed, and the independence of the only regulatory institution for television and radio – the National Commission on Television and Radio of Armenia – is disputed while print media and online media do not have a regulator or supervising body at all. Media ownership is not transparent with editorial independence compromised by explicit and implicit pressures from political and business elites. The uncompetitive radio and television licensing and the incomplete digital transition continue to obstruct the development of the media sector

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[3] In this research, the criteria through which hate speech was identified are based on the CoE definition and include all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote, or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants, and people of immigrant origin (Recommendation N R (1997) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on "Hate Speech" 1997).

(Melikyan, et al. 2013, Armenia. Freedom of the Press 2016 2016). According to the 2017 World Press Freedom Index, an annual report released by the international organization Reporters Without Borders, Armenia ranked 79th among 173 countries (Reporters Without Borders 2017).

Analyzed Media Outlets

We selected the media outlets Hetq.am (with monthly total visitors at about 250,000), A1plus.am (with monthly total visitors at about 550,000), Azatutyun.am (with monthly total visitors at about 760,000), and Tert.am (with monthly total visitors at about 4,800,000) to analyze for this research (SimilarWeb 2017). While the popularity of the outlets according to Alexa.com was the main criterion of selection, we had to exclude some outlets[4] that ranked as the most popular based on interviews with experts and journalists in Armenia. According to them, the main portion of the traffic of the most popular media outlets in Armenia revealed by Alexa.com derives from "parasite news"; that is coverage related to showbusiness, sport, emergencies, and the like (Journalists from the Independent Journalists' Network 2017). According to a 2014 overview of ranking platforms as well, Alexa.com does not reflect the real picture in the country (Martirosyan 2014). Therefore, Alexa.com rankings were supplemented by other rankings, such as the survey of the "Armenian Media Landscape" conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (Pearce 2011) and the report "Mapping Digital Media: Armenia" by the Open Society Foundation (Melikyan, et al. 2013) to identify the outlets to be analyzed.

According to a cross-analysis of the above sources, A1plus.am, Azatutyun.am, and Hetq.am are among the most popular online media outlets in Armenia despite their low ranking on Alexa.com. Tert.am was among the most popular both on Alexa.com and the other sources.

Launched in 2008, Tert.am is a multi-genre news website providing coverage of the most important developments in Armenia, the region, and worldwide. It is a pro-government media outlet (Melikyan, et al. 2013). In May 2014, Tert.am joined the Pan-Armenian Media Group that owns a considerable portion of the media sector in Armenia.

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[4] News.am, 1in.am, shamshyan.com, mamul.am, armlur.am, lragir.am, lurer.com were omitted even though they ranked higher on Alexa.com (Top Sites in Armenia 2017).

Launched as a media agency in 1993, A1plus was the last independent TV channel in Armenia. On April 1 of 2002, the National Commission on Television and Radio of Armenia decided that A1plus would lose its license; this decision was largely claimed to be implicitly conditioned by the outlet's critical stance towards the government and its policies (Nyman-Metcalf and Richter 2010, 14). Since then, A1plus operates online and broadcasts through its website and the ArmNews TV[5] channel with only 20 minutes of air time daily.

Hetq.am is an online newspaper published in Yerevan by the "Investigative Journalists" NGO in 2001. As highlighted above, Hetq.am was the first media outlet in Armenia to adopt an ethics code. It also has been and remains the leader in disseminating investigative content in Armenia.

Azatutyun.am is the website of the Armenian Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). Azatutyun is not only an online news platform but also a radio channel and has the largest newsroom among all Armenian media outlets even compared to TV channels. Its newsroom has mainly socio-political content, which was also important in our selection.

All the selected media outlets are inclined to be critically disposed towards the Armenian realities. They also highlight their adherence to journalistic ethics and professionalism. They try to instill the culture of fact-checking and consulting a variety of relevant sources in public journalism; that is engaging citizens and creating public debate. In contrast to the fully-controlled television, these media outlets try to maintain their independence from the authorities.

Analyzed Groups

There are assumed to be 20 ethnic groups living in Armenia today (Asatryan and Arakelova 2002). According to the last census in 2011, minorities constitute three percent of the population, approximately 60 thousand people (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia 2011). Minorities are often underrepresented in different institutions and discriminated against regarding their culture, language, and traditions. Even though the law and the state authorities promote the concept of inter-group tolerance and understanding in society (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2017), Armenia is widely perceived as a mono-ethnic and mono-religious state. This perception, when coupled with the lack of media

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[5] ArmNews TV is also a member of Pan-Armenian Media Group.

attention and representation, limits the visibility of minorities and leads to their isolation and exclusion from the society. Keeping this context in mind, we have decided to analyze the media coverage about Yezidis and Syrian-Armenians for Armenia.

Yezidis are an ethno-confessional group and the largest minority in Armenia. They speak Kurmanji, a Northern-Kurdish dialect related to the North-West Iranian dialects. However, in an attempt to delimit the Yezidi identity from the Kurdish identity, part of the community itself refers to the language not as a dialect of Kurdish but as "Ezdiki", a separate language, and distinguishes themselves from Kurds not only religiously but also ethnically (Armenia - Kurds (Kurdmanzh) n.d., McIntosh 2003). According to the 2011 census, the number of Yezidis of Armenia is 35,308 (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia 2011). Yezidis live compactly mostly in rural areas of the regions of Aragatsotn, Armavir, and Ararat as well as in the cities of Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Armavir, Ashtarak, Artashat, and Gyumri.

We also decided to analyze the representation of Syrian-Armenians in the media in Armenia. Despite their ethnic Armenian identification, Syrian-Armenians carry socio-cultural differences from the local Armenian population. They began to migrate *en masse* to Armenia from the beginning of the civil war in Syria. According to the UNHCR data, as of December 31 of 2016, there were about 14,000 Syrian-Armenians (refugees and/or asylum-seekers) registered in Armenia (United Nations 2016). Legally, Syrian-Armenians are refugees, but some of them do not see themselves in this way, as they consider Armenia as their historical homeland and reject the term "refugee" as stigmatizing. Others refuse to be called "repatriates" as their migration has been forced by conflict (Hakobyan 2014, Tert.am 2016).

Main Findings

We screened four media outlets through the keywords "Yezidi" and "Syrian-Armenian" for a six-month period from June to December 2016. More specifically, we chose the first Tuesday of each month from June to November. We screened the media outlets for the entire month of December since the collected material for the previous period was not enough for a meaningful analysis. A large number of the analyzed media items were based only on a single source, and almost none of them had hyperlinks. While the majority of these items were presented as the media outlets' own production, the content

was explicitly taken from other sources as duplicates were frequently identified. This is indicative of a dominating single discourse in the media and a lack of qualified personnel in many outlets.

Overall, the representation of these two groups in the media is very limited. Table 1 presents the number of media items identified through the screening criteria and analyzed in this research.

Table 1 Number of the Analyzed Media Items

	Tert.am	A1plus.am	Azatutyun.am	Hetq.am	Total
Yezidis	4	3	2	6	15
Syrian-Armenians	11	9	5	7	32
Total	15	12	7	13	47

Syrian-Armenians appear twice more popular on the agenda of the media outlets than Yezidis although their population is half of that of Yezidis. One reason for this could be the general urgency to cover the Syrian civil war and the refugee flows in 2016. More subjectively, this reflects the above-stated overall limit in covering vulnerable groups with a further bias towards "Armenian issues". Syrian-Armenians identify themselves and are largely identified by the society as Armenian. This allows the media outlets to represent Syrian-Armenians as a part of the wider Armenian people, and the issues concerning them are covered in the media much more broadly, resonating with an overall "Armenian agenda".

Table 2 Main Topics

Assistance to Syrian-Armenians	21
Syrian-Armenian entrepreneurs	5
Integration of Syrian-Armenians	4
Yezidi rights	4

Difficult living conditions in Yezidi villages	3
Yezidi soldiers killed during the escalation in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in April 2016	2

We did not find instances of open hate speech in the analyzed media items. However, this is not indicative of the overall situation with hate speech in conventional and social media targeting different vulnerable groups in the country (Anti-Discrimination Center "Memorial" 2017, Epress.am 2017). As explained above, the choice of the media outlets with a stricter stance on ethics and professionalism has played a role for the results of the analysis. The period under analysis might also have cast influence over the content of the media items. After the escalation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone in April 2016, there was a period of ethnic solidarity in Armenia. The overall "invisibility" and marginalization of ethnic groups and their issues plays a role not only in the limited number of media items but also in manifesting hate speech – perhaps for the better. A very small number of actors – official, civil society, media – is interested in speaking up about the issues of ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups. Discriminatory speech is mainly manifested through underlining the ethnic belonging of some criminals or troublemakers. In these cases, the ethnic identity – presumed by the media item or assumed by the individual – is associated with the crime and linked with an entire group.

Most of the retrieved material was about the resettlement and integration of Syrian-Armenians in the Armenian society (see Table 2 above). Another issue reported for both Syrian-Armenian and Yezidi communities was the lack of knowledge of the literary standard of the Armenian language. Armenian is the only official state language. While the state language policy maintains to support minority languages, it mostly promotes the use of Armenian.

Table 3 Media Items Published about Language/Religious Discrimination in Armenian Schools

Yezidis	4
Syrian-Armenians	2

A small number of media items mention the problems that Yezidis face. One such item concerns the latent violation of their religious rights and freedoms in

the secondary schools in Armenia where Yezidi children are taught the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church against their will (Boris Mourazi: 'Your Employees Want to Keep You Away from the Truth' 2016).

According to the media items, Yezidis are more likely to have lower levels of education than individuals from other communities. This is partly because of the poor economic climate, shortage of Yezidi teachers, and the remoteness of many Yezidi villages. Yezidis also have reportedly been disadvantaged in the allocation of privatized land and water supply.

The general lack of media coverage of problems experienced by Syrian-Armenians and an even smaller one for Yezidis also results in almost no coverage of cultural aspects of the lives of these communities in the media items analyzed.

Table 4 Quoted Actors

Government, the President	18
Group representative	11
NGO representative	9
Entrepreneurs from Armenia and the diaspora	5

In terms of agency, the minorities are represented as bearers of various issues, and the authorities as those who can give solutions to their problems. The problem-solving capacity was mainly attributed to the authorities and in particularly to the President, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defense, those of Education and Culture, as well as to entrepreneurs from Armenia and the diaspora. As can be seen from Table 4, only in one fourth of the media items, a group representative was quoted.

Complementing content analysis with discourse analysis, we identified one recurring theme – the reference to the "brotherhood" of Armenian and Yezidi peoples.

Table 5 Media Items on the "Brotherhood" of Armenians and Minority Groups

Yezidis	5

| Syrian-Armenians | 2 |

"We do not consider Yezidis of Armenia as a national minority; we walk the same path of history together with the Yezidi people, and our march is in procession", – noted in his speech Minister of Education and Science Levon Mkrtchyan (The Yezidi Language in the Schools of the Republic of Armenia: The Concerns of the Yezidi Community 2016). A similar statement was made by a member of the President's administration, Gayane Manukyan, at the presentation of the newly published book "The Yezidi Hero Who Stands on the Border" dedicated to the ethnic Yezidi soldiers that died during the April 2016 escalation in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: "This is our gratitude to our brother nation, for the blood their hero-sons shed for the Armenian statehood, for the protection of the borders of our joint Fatherland" (The Book 'The Yezidi Hero Who Stands on the Border' Was Published 2016).

The discourse of "brotherhood", while not entirely new, is very much in line with the rising militarism in the policies implemented by the government after the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in April 2016. While all citizens of Armenia are already obliged to serve in the army, on October 5 of 2016, in his inaugural speech at the National Assembly, the new Defense Minister of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan called for building a "nation-army". Given Armenia's political challenges, he declared, the armed forces should play a greater role in the country's social and economic life, and the entire population should be linked to the army by means of scientific, economic, industrial, or other projects, and the army must become a "school and workshop of society" (Grigoryan 2016). The topic of the "age-old brotherhood" of the two peoples neatly fits into the frames of the discourse of the "nation-army". While the theme of "brotherhood" featured also in the representation of Syrian-Armenians as well, no media items were detected underlining the belonging of Syrian-Armenians to the "nation-army".

Azerbaijan

The Media Environment in Azerbaijan

Several international organizations have underlined the deterioration of media freedoms in Azerbaijan during 2016 as government control tightened further, relatively independent sources ceased functioning, and dissident journalists

and bloggers received threats or were subject to violence (Irex.org 2017, Human Rights Watch 2016, Azerbaijan. Freedom of the Press 2016 2016).This situation inevitably affects the quality and professionalism of journalism. Among media actors, there is increasing self-censorship as well as dependence on funding or grants, which leads to the production of content conforming to the views of the donor-parties (Irex.org 2017, 7-10).

With regard to the coverage of minorities and vulnerable groups, this deterioration of the situation translates into further silencing of criticism and dissatisfaction about the issues of these groups. In the past, the coverage of the minorities was estimated to be as low as 1 percent (Media Diversity Institute 2006). One of the main reasons is the perception of minorities as a potential threat to the country's unity and stability (European Centre for Minority Issues 2011, 99). Another factor bringing "invisibility" to the issues of minorities is the imposition of the official discourse of tolerance and multiculturalism that shrinks the space for voicing criticism. Thus, the ownership and control over the media, self-censorship, and the controversial perception of the topic prevents media outlets from producing content on minority issues.

Analyzed Media Outlets

For Azerbaijan, we chose the media outlets Oxu.az (with monthly total visitors at about 2,700,000), Milli.az (with monthly total visitors at about 1,650,000), Haqqin.az (with monthly total visitors at about 2,350,000), and Yenicag.az (with monthly total visitors at about 200,000), based on Alexa.com rankings (Top Sites in Azerbaijan 2017, SimilarWeb 2017). Although Metbuat.az is ranked as the most popular outlet, we could not analyze it as its archive is not accessible. Also, Big.az was not analyzed despite its popular ranking as it mostly produces coverage on entertainment.

Operating since 2013, Oxu.az has national and international coverage, and it is considered the second most-read online outlet after Metbuat.az. It currently belongs to the Garant Media Holding Company.

Milli.az was launched in 2010, as the Azerbaijani-language version of the Day.az news portal, belonging to the Day.Az Media Company.

Haqqin.az was founded by Eynulla Fatullayev, a dissident journalist, imprisoned during 2007-2011 allegedly for his criticism of government policies. Soon after his release, Fatullayev admitted changing his attitudes, and started targeting the alleged "enemies" of the government through Haqqin.az (Kucera

2017). This media outlet provides latest news and analysis only in Russian and English.

Yenicag.az, founded in 2006, provides coverage of events in the social, political, and cultural spheres of life in Azerbaijan and around the world. It was added to the analysis to obtain more data about Lezgis as the data from the other sources was insufficient.

Analyzed Groups

Among the minorities in Azerbaijan, we selected Lezgis for the analysis of representation in the media. Lezgis are the largest minority group in Azerbaijan (Matveeva, The South Caucasus: Nationalism, Conflict and Minorities 2002, Azerbaijan - Lezgins n.d.). According to the 2009 census, there are 180,000 Lezgis in Azerbaijan, making up 2 percent of the population (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2009). Lezgis are a Caucasian people related to smaller groups including Aguls, Rutuls, and Tabasarans. Their language belongs to the northeast Caucasian language group.

In addition to Lezgis, we decided to analyze the displaced persons, forcibly relocated as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijanis forcibly displaced during the Nagorno-Karabakh war are not considered minorities; nevertheless, they constitute a large section of the population, experience various problems in the society including exclusion and discrimination, and necessitate specific policies for protection (Iskandarli 2012). According to the data provided by the State Committee for the Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, there are around 1,200,000 refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and persons looking for asylum in Azerbaijan (State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2017)[6].

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[6] The number of refugees, IDPs, and asylums-seekers varies depending on the sources. The International Crisis Group estimates the figure at 600,000 (International Crisis Group 2012); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan claims over 1 million (Mfa.gov.az 2013); researchers Yulia Gurayeva-Aliyeva and Tabib Huseynov argue it is 700,000 (Gureyeva-Aliyeva and Huseynov 2011).

Main Findings

We monitored the media outlets for the period of June-December 2016. We screened the media outlets on all days within the chosen period. As this period revealed insufficient data for the representation of Lezgis in the media, the monitoring was extended till March 2006, again screening all days within this period. Table 6 illustrates the number of media items analyzed.

Table 6 Number of the Analyzed Media Items

	Milli.az		Oxu.az		Haqqin.az		Yenicag.az		Total
	News article	Opinion column/other	News article	Opinion column/other	News article	Opinion column/other	News article	Opinion column/other	
Displaced persons	9	3	7	1	7	1	N/A[7]	N/A	28
Lezgis and other minorities	3	1	4	0	0	3	4	0	15
Total	16		12		11		4		43

Overall, 43 news articles and opinion columns were analyzed. Opinion columns appear less frequent than news articles. Furthermore, some of the analyzed media items placed in the opinion columns of the media outlets do not strictly fall into the category "opinion", as in several cases, they represent a reportage or simple coverage rather than analysis. Tackling the issue of these groups analytically or through individual opinion columns is uncommon. The media coverage is generally very low for both groups. Yet, the coverage of the displaced persons is twice more than that of Lezgis.

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[7] Since Yenicag.az was added to the analysis to obtain more data about Lezgis as the data from the other sources was insufficient, it was not screened for the representation of displaced persons.

The analyzed media items frequently referred to Lezgis within the ideology of multiculturalism, an approach that Azerbaijan formulated during the consolidation of the newly independent state, affected by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Along with multiculturalism, it is argued that the concept of a civic nation and a civic understanding of "Azerbaijanism" is also promoted pragmatically to maintain social cohesion and peace and prevent foreign powers from instrumentalizing ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences (Cornell, Karaveli and Ajeganov, Azerbaijan's Formula: Secular Governance and Civic Nationhood 2016)[8]. The attempt to combine multiculturalism with civic nationalism in practice translates into a contradictory blend of ethno-nationalistic ideas and discourses of tolerance and ethnolinguistic pluralism, with the concept of the civic nation remaining rather declarative.

Other common topics were related to the past and potential conflicts. The 1918 massacre in Guba, the attacks perpetrated by the Sadval movement in 1994[9], the looming Islamist threats and increasing recruitment to ISIS in the neighboring Dagestan were mentioned often in relation with Lezgis.

Table 7 Topics about Lezgis

Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan	5

[8] For a more detailed analysis of the concept of Azerbaijanism and the discourse of tolerance, see (Abbasov, et al. 2016, 181-228).

[9] For more information on the Sadval movement, see (Matveeva and McCartney, Policy Responses to an Ethnic Community Division: Lezgins in Azerbaijan 1997, 233). In brief, the Sadval movement formed in Dagestan, Russia, and campaigned for the redrawing of the Russian-Azerbaijani border to create a single Lezgin state – Lezgistan – in the areas of the compact residence of Lezgis in Dagestan and Azerbaijan, although the claim for statehood was rejected in 1996 as unrealistic and "producing a negative effect on the relations between Azerbaijanis and Lezgis" (Matveeva and McCartney, Policy Responses to an Ethnic Community Division: Lezgins in Azerbaijan 1997, 233). Meanwhile, researchers point out that the Sadval movement does not receive large support among the Lezgi people, and assume that the movement receives foreign backing serving the purposes of the destabilization of the country (Matveeva and McCartney, Policy Responses to an Ethnic Community Division: Lezgins in Azerbaijan 1997, Cornell, Azerbaijan Since Independence 2011). It could be argued that currently the movement lost popularity on both sides of the Russian-Azerbaijani border (Azerbaijan - Lezgins n.d.).

Terrorist acts/threats, including the Baku metro bombings in 1994	3
Common historic tragedies, including massacres in Guba and Qusar during World War One	2
Other	5

The media items quoted the President and Azerbaijani officials more often than Lezgis in the articles related to them.

Table 8 Quoted Actors about Lezgis

Lezgis and representatives of their community	4
Azerbaijani officials, the President	6
International officials	0
No quoted persons	6

Generally, the media represents Lezgis and other minority groups positively as people loving their traditions and living in peace and harmony with the majority. In some instances, one could critically view the denotations of minorities as "numerically small people", "national minorities living in our country", or the interchangeable use of "ethnic group" and "nationality" to imply ethnicity, more characteristic of the Soviet "nationalities policy"[10] (The 5th Republic Festival of National Minorities Has Been Held 2016, The Results of the Project 'Youth and Multiculturalism' Have Been Summarized 2016).

In several cases, the media items attempted to transmit the image of a "good minority", portraying behavior, attitudes, and beliefs that deserve to be

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[10] Rogers Brubaker elaborates on the nation-making policy of the Soviet Union in his publication. Brubaker asserts that the Soviet Union was "sponsoring, codifying, institutionalizing, even (in some cases) inventing nationhood and nationality on the sub-state level" (Brubaker 1996, 29). According to Brubaker, "tension between territorial and ethnocultural nationhood, and between territorial and extra-territorial national autonomy, was endemic to the Soviet nationality regime (Brubaker 1996, 40). And ethnicity was clearly the more fundamental concept in the Soviet scheme (Brubaker 1996, 46).

approved. In this line, inherent devotion and patriotism are seen as desired among minorities (Azerbaijani Military March Has Been Held in the Lezgin Language 2016, A Contestant to the 'Grandmothers' of Lenkeran is Coming Out -'Didiar' 2016).

The analyzed media items did not explicitly indicate the ethnicity of perpetrators when referring to terrorist attacks, crimes, or recruitment to ISIS. Rather, media items made implicit references to ethnicity. For instance, one media item pointed out that the ISIS commandant spoke Lezgi as his mother tongue (The ISIS Commandant from Qusar Threatening Azerbaijan 2016). In a similar implicit manner, a media item remarked that the perpetrator of the Baku metro bombings was "a member of the Sadval Lezgi National Movement" (It Has Been 22 Years Since the Baku Metro Bombings 2016). Furthermore, media items claimed that "ethnic separatists" are susceptible to the influence of outside forces who turn them into a tool in their hands (Adamova 2016, It Has Been 22 Years Since the Baku Metro Bombings 2016),

Table 9 Topics about Displaced Persons

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the peace process, and the need of the displaced persons to return to their homes (including the escalation in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in April 2016, return to Jojug Marjanli)	9(2)
Desperate living conditions of displaced families	4
Government policies and measures towards displaced persons	9
Discussing the possibility of cutting allowances and benefits for displaced persons	5
Other	1

Regarding displaced persons, the main topics were related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Another popular topic was the government policies and measures taken to improve the living conditions of displaced persons. A media item discussed the possibility of curtailing allowances and benefits for displaced persons (The Status of Refugees and IDPs May be Reconsidered 2016). In rare cases, the media depicted the daily hardships of displaced persons

and their desperate living conditions, voicing mild criticism on the inaction and lack of interest of the officials in charge.

Table 10 Quoted Actors about Displaced Persons

Azerbaijani officials, the President	19
International officials	8
Representatives of displaced persons, displaced persons themselves	5
No quoted person	3

Few media items reflected the opinions and attitudes expressed by the displaced persons and their representatives. The media items analyzed preferred to showcase opinions and views expressed by Azerbaijani officials and the President. Most articles quoting displaced persons were directly related to a more "critical" topic discussing their poor housing conditions and daily hardships.

The analyzed media items often portrayed the displaced persons as "our compatriots" or "Azerbaijani people" (Ilham Aliyev: 'One of the Main Natural Resources - Oil Serves the Interests of Our People' 2016). However, this discourse of the media does not necessarily reflect social attitudes towards displaced persons, often marked by marginalization and exclusion. Some media items used neutralizing and de-personalizing expressions such as "this category of people" or "persons related to this category" in the discussions on the reduction of the social benefits to displaced persons (The Status of Refugees and IDPs May be Reconsidered 2016).

We did not identify hate speech in relation to Lezgis or displaced persons in the scope of this analysis; however, hate speech and negative portrayal of Armenians was observed when the media items referred to the issues of displaced persons or Lezgis ('The Turk and Muslim World Should Fight Together Against Armenian Aggression' 2016, Mammadyarov on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict at the UN 2016, The Armenians Wiped Out Thousands of Lezgins in Guba and Qusar. Common Tragedy 2016).

Georgia

The Media Environment in Georgia

Like the other South Caucasus countries, Georgia also experiences issues with media freedom, albeit to a different degree. The Freedom Houses' 2016 report notes the political polarization of the media environment and the indirect but strong links between media outlets and different political parties (Georgia. Freedom of the Press 2016). The TV channels of the Georgian Public Broadcaster are the primary subject and source of the power struggle among the political parties. However, as noted by the Transparency International Georgia report: "The ownership of Georgian media outlets is transparent. [...] None of the major media outlets are *directly* [emphasis added] owned by a political group" (Transparency International Georgia 2015). In the 2017 Reporters Without Borders index, Georgia ranked the 64th becoming a leader in the Eastern Partnership and Caucasus Region (Reporters Without Borders 2017).

On the other hand, online media in Georgia seems less studied, and information regarding the ownership or political affiliation of online media is hard to come by. In 2015, Transparency International Georgia noted that despite the diversity of online media, in recent years, several groups of media outlets have formed, united around common political preferences (Transparency International Georgia 2015).

Analyzed Media Outlets

We selected the online media outlets Ambebi.ge, Newsport.ge, and On.ge for analysis based on Alexa.com rankings (Top Sites in Georgia 2017). The rankings were also cross-checked through the Georgian system of Top.ge that also provides the daily average visitor numbers (Rating of Popular Georgian Sites 2017). Since Ambebi.ge belongs to the media agency Palitra, we omitted the other media outlets owned by the same agency, also given that Ambebi.ge feeds off these media outlets, republishing materials.

Ambebi.ge with the number of daily average visitors at 130,500 is the most popular and one of the oldest online news outlets that collects and republishes content from other sister websites from the media holding it belongs to. It reports on politics, society, economics, international affairs as well as "yellow press" and celebrity stories.

Newsport.ge with the number of daily average visitors at 80,186 has one of the largest numbers of Facebook subscribers in Georgia at 661,400, and it reports on politics, society, law, economics, crime, religion, and culture.

On.ge with the number of daily average visitors at 23,248 is a relatively new website, with advanced IT support and cutting-edge visual design. The related agency, On.ge, in parallel, runs more websites, such as Goodnews.on.ge and Teoria.on.ge. The main message it aims to conveys is "quality reporting" and "trust", and this might be the reason why it has gained popularity in a short period of time[11].

Analyzed Groups

Although there is no official legal definition of ethnic or national minorities in Georgia, with the ratification of the CoE "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" in 2005, Georgia effectively recognized the definition suggested by the document and ever since uses these terms interchangeably in its strategic or policy documents (National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration 2009, State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020 2015). According to different sources, there are more than 50 different ethnic groups living on the territory of Georgia. The latest census from 2014 shows that 13.2 percent of the total population of the country identify themselves as not ethnically Georgian with the most numerous groups from the ethnic Azerbaijani (6.3 percent) and Armenian (4.5 percent) communities (National Statistics Office of Georgia 2016). We analyzed the representation of Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Russians, Ossetians, Abkhazians, Kists/Chechens, the Roma, Assyrians, Udis, and Avars in the identified media outlets. We also screened media items that referred to Molokans and Dukhobors, religious groups of Russian origin. Additionally, we

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[11] This outlet has its own "Editorial Code" that contains a section on discriminatory language and stereotypes, maintaining that ethnicity should not be mentioned in any material (especially in the criminal section) unless there is a confirmed correlation to the story or in case of a search for a wanted suspect or coverage of a hate crime motivated by ethnicity (Editorial Code n.d.). This outlet can serve as an example of how reporting on minorities can be done ethically. The results of the monitoring of the outlet for the given period revealed only one material that contained a somewhat controversial text about ethnic Armenians living in Georgia.

included in the search variations of the names popularly and sometimes mistakenly used for the Avar identity – "Daghestanian" or "Lak".

Main Findings[12]

The research period targeted the entire calendar year of 2016. We screened the media outlets on all days within the chosen period. However, in cases where sufficient data could not be obtained, the second half of 2015 (July-December) was also entirely included into the analysis. This was mostly the case for numerically small groups, such as Russians, Ossetians, Abkhazians, Kists/Chechens, Assyrians, the Roma, Udis, and Avars.

Table 11 Number of the Analyzed Media Items

Ethnic Group	Number of Media Items
Armenians	19
Azerbaijanis	11
Russians	5
Ossetians	3
Abkhazians	7
Kists/Chechens	8
Roma	6
Assyrians	2
Udis	2

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[12] There is a lack of literature dealing with the representation of minorities in the Georgian media. Although the media monitoring research by the Media Development Foundation focuses on hate speech and gender representation before the elections for the period of April-October 2016, no significant indication can be found on hate speech based on ethnicity in that particular report (Media Development Foundation 2016).

Avars	3
Different minorities mentioned in one media item	10
Total	76

We screened out 76 media items with at least one of the keywords. These included news pieces, articles, and interviews. However, only 40 of these media items were relevant for this research as the remaining media items were related to a foreign country (for example, Armenians of Armenia)[13] or could not be related to the understanding of the representation of the group in the media.

The most important pattern was that ethnicity within the articles was mentioned without proper justification or need to do so. According to Paragraph 4 of Article 33 of the "Code of Conduct of Broadcasters" developed by the Georgian National Commission of Communications, when unjustified referral to ethnicity derives from a respondent, this should not go unchallenged, even in live broadcast, and presenters should ask the authors of offensive statements to substantiate their views (Georgian National Commission of Communications 2009). This standard is not observed in many cases.

For example, there was a report on Satanist groups in Georgia, and reference to the Armenian ethnicity popped out through the narrative of one of the interviewers claiming that "Satanist groups always gather in a house previously owned by ethnic Armenians" ('I Am Ashamed That I Wanted to be a Satanist' - Dangerous 'Game' of Georgian Youth 2016). Similarly, the analysis revealed that ethnicity was mentioned primarily when a criminal or otherwise negative story was reported. For example, the only time a media item featured Avars, a small ethnic group living in the Kakheti region, was in a story about possible cases of genital mutilation of young females in the community (International Organization IWPR: 'Young Girls are Forced to Circumcize in Kvareli Region' 2016). Another context where ethnicity was mentioned unnecessarily was the coverage of history. Pieces with a historical perspective, where reference to Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Avars, as well as Turks and others appear most frequently with negative connotations, for example, in connection

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[13] Media items that referred to both foreign countries and ethnic groups living in Georgia were included.

with wars, impede the promotion of tolerance and the integration of diverse communities as well as reinforce certain stereotypes.

In the analyzed media items, the largest number of instances of hate speech and deviation from the standards were observed regarding ethnic Armenians living in Georgia. Although there were a couple of positive articles (Two Oldest Hotels in Tbilisi Whose Reconstruction Cost Millions of Dollars 2016, Tragic History of Everyone's Beloved Actor - Frunzik Mkrtchyan Beyond Camera 2016), stories where ethnic Armenians are mentioned often include the following negative patterns:

- Frequent revitalization of alleged historical enmity between Georgians and Armenians: For example, there was an interview with a historian with the following title: "Armenians Deceived Naive Georgians and Won the War". The interview described the events of 1917 and alleged an invasion of Armenians in Georgia through the betrayal of Armenians then living in Georgia (Armenians Deceived Naive Georgians and Won the War 2016).
- Reports that ethnic Armenians act against ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia: Every now and then there were articles or interviews describing the situation in Abkhazia with references to the negative role that the Armenian community plays aiding Russians in the conflict.
- Narratives that Armenians (including those from Armenia) steal the historical and cultural heritage of Georgia: There was yet another huge scandal at the beginning of 2016 when the media reported in headlines that "Armenia can be represented in the Eurovision song contest with a Georgian song" (Armenia Can be Represented in the 'Eurovision' Song Contest by 'Country of Flowers'? 2016).

Another pattern was the reference to ethnicity in connection with conflicts. For example, Abkhazians were framed mostly in the context of the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict. There were a number of articles with interviewers recalling the "barbarous and torturous" acts of ethnic Abkhazians against Georgians during the conflict ('And This is the 17th Georgian Killed in My Name" - Words of the Occupant While Killing Giga Otkhozoria 2016, 'I Was Electrified in Abkhazia' - Interview with Former Prisoner in Abkhazia 2016). Different respondents (mostly displaced persons from Abkhazia) narrated one-sided dramatic stories that invigorate hatred against this particular ethnic group. This can be easily observed in the comments section following these media items.

The other group that was associated with conflict is the Kists/Chechens. Nearly all media items containing reference to ethnic Kists/Chechens were about religious radicalization, terrorism, or the war in Syria. This, on the one hand, reinforces stereotypes about this ethnic group and, on the other hand, creates a somewhat negative image among the public. In these cases, the constant reiteration of ethnicity, religion, or the geographical location (the Pankisi gorge, where more than 90 percent of the population are ethnic Kists/Chechens) leads to the demonization of this group.

Despite many recommendations[14] to the media outlets, only a few media items analyzed aimed to promote ethnic diversity and tolerance, such as an article reporting on a village in Samtskhe-Javakheti with a Dukhobor population (A Village Inhabited by Dukhobors in Javakheti 2016), an article covering the history of ethnic Abkhazians in Adjara (On.ge 2016), or the one reporting about the Molokan settlements in the Kakheti region (Holy Villages in Georgia 2016). While two of these media items feature the numerically small groups, the general observation is that these groups are not represented properly. Some numerically small groups, such as Assyrians, Udis, Ossetians, or Avars (the last group with the exception of the above-mentioned negative context) were not featured in any of the analyzed media items.

The use of discriminatory terms or tags for ethnic groups – instead of the proper names – has always been an issue in the media in Georgia. For example, in the public domain, the word "Tatar", loaded with a negative connotation, is frequently used for ethnic groups predominantly adhering to Islam (Azerbaijanis, Turks, Kurds, and sometimes Georgians living in Adjara). Within this study, we did not find this particular term. Yet, we found a couple of instances of discriminatory terms regarding the Roma. One media item was about a Facebook post of a famous Georgian singer, complaining about the Roma people in the streets, using the word "Tsigan" (Newposts.ge 2015). The media outlet reporting on this post failed to inform the readers that using such terminology is discriminatory against this group as provided by a number of regulatory mechanisms. Another case was the reference to a location in Tbilisi

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[14] These include the Second Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the CoE "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" and the "Code of Conduct of Broadcasters" of the Georgian National Commission of Communications (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2016, Georgian National Commission of Communications 2009).

called the "Bazar of Tsigans" that the media outlet made in reporting of a demonstration (Four Persons Have Been Detained During the Protest Close to Shopping Mall 2016).

Turkey

The Media Environment in Turkey

Turkey is currently going through a period in which racism and polarization are on the rise. According to the final report of the Hrant Dink Foundation's Media Watch on Hate Speech Project (Engindeniz Şahan 2016), hate speech against ethnic, national, and religious identities as well as discriminatory discourses against women and LGBTI individuals increased in 2016 because of several factors such as political agenda, economic instability, and immigration, especially from Syria. Moreover, media monitoring reports of the Independent Communication Network (BIA) demonstrate that the number of journalists behind bars rose from 31 to 131 in 2016. In addition, again in 2016, 2,708 journalists and media workers were fired or forced to resign (Onderoglu 2017).

The state policy on media in Turkey has been shaping the media-state relationship since the establishment of the first newspaper in the late Ottoman period. Besides, almost all big media groups have investments in the energy, telecommunications, financial, or construction sectors of the economy. There are no barriers for preventing these groups from participating in public tenders. Consequently, while public interest is sacrificed for business interests, the media competes with the government for political power and profit rather than performing its watchdog function (Kurban and Sözeri 2012). A network map published in 2013 shows media patrons and their other investments in the construction and energy sector and demonstrates how and to what extent the ownership of media damages its independence (Networks of Dispossession 2013). Thus, the political economy of the media as well as the general political context have had severe consequences for the media including the coverage of minorities and vulnerable groups.

Analyzed Media Outlets

According to Alexa.com for the analyzed period, the most popular online news outlets in Turkey were Sabah.com.tr (with monthly total visitors at about 83,200,000), Haber7.com (with monthly total visitors at about 48,500,000), and

Ensonhaber.com (with monthly total visitors at about 28,200,000) (Top Sites in Turkey 2017, SimilarWeb 2017). However, as the archives of Haber7.com and Ensonhaber.com were not accessible, the fourth and the fifth most popular online news outlets, Hurriyet.com.tr (with monthly total visitors at about 161,000,000) and Milliyet.com.tr (with monthly total visitors at about 134,500,000) were analyzed (SimilarWeb 2017).

The Sabah newspaper was founded in 1985 and started to be published online in 1997. Since 2008, the Turkuvaz Media Group owns the newspaper. The Group itself belongs to the Çalık Holding whose former chief executive officer, Berat Albayrak, is the son-in-law of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the current Minister of Energy (Economist.com 2008). It is a pro-government news outlet reporting heavily on the position of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) and President Erdoğan.

Hurriyet.com.tr is the fourth most popular online news outlet, while its printed version, founded in 1948, is the most popular daily of Turkey since November 2016 (Medyatava.com 2016). It currently belongs to the Dogan Media Group owned by the Dogan Holding. It has been known as the flagship media outlet of the secular position in Turkey. However, for the last few years, it has been criticized for self-censorship and producing pro-government publications.

Milliyet.com.tr is the fifth most popular online news outlet. As a printed newspaper, it was founded in 1950. In 2011, it was purchased by a joint venture of the Demirören Group and the Karacan Group. Milliyet was known as a social democrat outlet, but since the ownership of Demirören, in parallel with the escalation of pressures on the media and journalism in Turkey, the newspaper fired several reporters and columnists and became more pro-government.

Analyzed Groups

For Turkey, we selected Kurds and the Syrian refugees as the groups for analysis. Although Kurds are not recognized as a minority officially, they fit the definition of national minorities[15]. The Syrian refugees, on the other hand, are not defined as a minority; however, they face similar problems in the society, and their number continues to grow along with a conflict potential in the society.

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[15] Minorities in Turkey were officially determined by the Laussanne Treaty of 1923.

Kurds are one of the indigenous communities of geographic areas now under the administration of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Armenia. Kurds are not only one of the oldest indigenous communities of Turkey but also the one with a history of struggle for rights through both political and armed means. Mesut Yeğen places the Turkish state's engagement with the Kurdish question from 1923 until the 1990s on three pillars – assimilation, repression, and containment (Yeğen 2015). However, since the 1990s, Turkey has faced the Kurds' very strong resistance to the politics of assimilation and repression both in military and political domains. Besides, the candidacy for full membership to the EU also led Turkey to the peace process, which was initiated by the AKP government in 2007. However, following a series of elections, the polarization accelerated. Since the bomb attack of June 5 in 2015 during an election rally of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) in Diyarbakır, several attacks took place in Turkey in different cities, including Ankara and Istanbul. As a result, the peace process came to an end. Currently, the "fight against terrorism" is again back on the agenda of Turkey, the military operation in Southeast Anatolia has resumed, and the co-presidents and several members of the HDP have been arrested.

Syrian refugees have been arriving *en mass* to Turkey since 2011 as a result of the civil war. As of April 2017, the UNHCR declared that 2.97 million Syrians were registered in Turkey by the government. The arrival of Syrians has fueled already existing problems, such as unemployment, shortcomings in education in the mother tongue and the social security system, exclusion, and discrimination. Even though five years have passed since the first Syrian refugees arrived in Turkey in large numbers, there are still unmet urgent humanitarian needs that cannot be ignored, alongside welfare concerns related to labor, education, and language (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017).

Main Findings

We analyzed all news articles and opinion columns containing the keywords "Kurd" and "Syrian" in three online media outlets on the first Tuesday of each month between July and December 2016. The number of analyzed media items can be seen in Table 12 below.

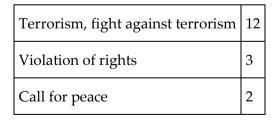*Table 12 Number of Analyzed Media Items*

	Sabah.com.tr	Hurriyet.com.tr	Milliyet.com.tr	Total

	News article	Opinion column	News article	Opinion column	News article	Opinion column	
Syrian	13	2	54	4	17	1	91
Kurd	4	2	12	1	10	0	29
Total	21		71		28		120

The first significant finding was the small number of opinion columns compared to news articles during the period we analyzed. However, the power of columnists as opinion leaders to set the social and political agenda is non-negligible. Also, there was more coverage on Syrian refugees than Kurds. Although the problems and discussions about both are quite crucial and urgent, the refugees occupy more space in the media probably because it is a new topic for Turkey.

As the peace process ended by June 2015, the monitored period is a time when the armed conflict between the state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK)[16] restarted. With this new dynamic, the main topic of almost half of the articles (12 out of 29) including the word "Kurd" was terrorism or fight against terror. The Kurdish population, therefore, was often represented in the media in association with terrorism.

Table 13 Topics about Kurds

Terrorism, fight against terrorism	12
Violation of rights	3
Call for peace	2

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[16] The Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* in Kurdish) is a left-wing organization based in Turkey. Since 1984, the PKK has been involved in an armed conflict with the Turkish state. The PKK is considered a terrorist organization by the Turkish state as well as many other states and organizations.

There were only two media items that gave space to calls for peace. Additionally, three media items talked about the violation of rights of the Kurdish people. These media items quoted the words of an HDP deputy, a member of the Democratic Regions Party (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi*, DBP), and a Turkish teacher who prepared a video about coexistence with his students.

Apart from the main topics of the media items, the theme of "brotherhood" with Kurds also emerged in the media items. The expression "our Kurdish brothers" was mostly mentioned by government members or the President. This approach of seeing Kurds as brothers of Turks creates a hierarchic perception between identities putting Turks in a superior position. It also provides a basis for the distinction between "good Kurds" and "bad Kurds". Defining the large part of the Kurdish population as the Muslim and faithful brothers of Turks and Turkey, "other Kurds" who demand their rights or vote for the HDP or support the PKK are framed as all the same and are marginalized. This distinction also appears when we look at the quoted persons. Although Kurdish citizens of Turkey were one of the most quoted ones, all of them were the relatives of a "martyr", expressing their faith for Turkey.

As for the Syrian refugees, it is already known that Syrians are one of the most excluded and discriminated groups in Turkey both in the media and in daily life. The Hrant Dink Foundation's hate speech report shows that the Syrian refugees are the third group most subjected to hate speech in the printed media by the third quarter of 2015 (Engindeniz Şahan 2016). In 2014, the Foundation also published a separate report focusing on discriminatory discourses against Syrian refugees, underlining three main tendencies – lack of a rights-based point of view, security-oriented approach, and reproduction of discrimination and otherization (Ataman 2015). Although our research was more limited in scope, it also showed similar results.

The first significant finding was that there is a confusion on how to name Syrians. As they do not have an official status of refugees[17] and are protected under a temporary protection law, some media outlets call them "asylum seekers" or "immigrants". In the analyzed media items, they were often referred to as simply "Syrians" (Syrian children, a Syrian family, a Syrian boy,

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[17] Turkey has geographical reservations on the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; therefore, it does not officially recognize Syrians as "refugees" (Asylum Information Database 2017).

etc.). Seven articles (five in Hurriyet.com.tr and two in Milliyet.com.tr) underlined that these people had to leave their country because of the ongoing internal war in Syria. Even though the term "refugee" is not officially applicable, it would be important for the media outlets to explain that they escaped from war to show the humanitarian dimension of the crisis.

Table 14 How Syrian Refugees are Named

Syrian	56
Syrian asylum seekers	6
Syrian refugees	6
Syrian citizens	4
Syrian immigrants	3

Only eight articles gave statistics about the Syrian refugee population. Since most of them were through quotes rather than official numbers, we can assume there has been a lack of statistical information about the refugees.

Table 15 Quoted Actors about Syrian Refugees

Government, the President	29
NGO representative	12
Local government	9
Syrian person	7

Media items quoted mostly government members, the President, and NGO representatives that work on the refugee problem. Most of these NGOs have a close relationship with the government or the President. For example, an article on Sabah.com.tr quoted the vice-president of KADEM (Women and Democracy Association) who is President Erdoğan's daughter (Altindis 2016). Only seven times in a total of 91 media items, a Syrian person's opinion was quoted while writing about Syrians.

The most popular topic was the issue of citizenship with 22 media items. Developments in the period under research have contributed to the popularity of this theme. Prior to the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15 of 2016, the government had signaled mixed messages over its intentions to grant Syrians Turkish citizenship. This has prompted some controversy from the opponents of the ruling AKP, who are concerned that President Erdoğan is seeking to turn the Syrian community into a loyal constituency for the future – another politically charged move in the context of increasingly curtailed citizenship rights for Turkish citizens during the state of emergency (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017). The popularity of this theme for the public and media agenda is also demonstrated by the fact that six opinion columns over seven talked about citizenship issues. While the media items on Sabah.com.tr supported citizenship for Syrians, the other media outlets gave voice to opposing arguments on this idea. However, these counter-arguments failed to stay focused on the politically charged nature of granting citizenship or other critical approaches and mostly reproduced discrimination.

Compared to five media items about humanitarian aid projects, only one piece was detected about a rights-based project. This approach strengthens the perception of Syrians as "aidless" instead of individuals with ownership and claim to their rights.

Finally, in two news articles, covering a singular criminal incident, the identity of the victims as Syrian was highlighted though we find it was not relevant to the incident. Independently from this example and more generally, the national or ethnic identities are very commonly mentioned without any reason when the suspects are from a minority group, labeling minorities as possible threats.

Comparative Overview of Findings

This paper has aimed to discuss the representation of minorities and vulnerable groups in four countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey – also with a comparative lens. In each country, we monitored the selected media outlets during a limited period to expose the patterns in the media discourses about minorities and vulnerable groups. In addition to analyzing the media discourses, we took into consideration the political independence of the media

outlets, the economic affiliations of the media owners, the protection of the freedom of expression, and the respect for media ethics codes for each country as the media discourses are largely shaped by these factors.

Varying degrees of state pressure over media outlets are present in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. The persecution and arrests of individual journalists or institutional fines on media outlets affect the content of the publications, also causing self-censorship by media actors. Moreover, the monopolization of media outlets by a few companies and the business interests of these companies jeopardize and limit the plurality of opinion and the freedom of the media in these countries. While outright persecution of media actors is not widespread in Georgia, its media environment has its own challenges in the form of tacit affiliations of media outlets with political forces or politically motivated decisions concerning the media as illustrated by the court case of TV channel Rustavi 2.

Against this general background, the voices of minorities and vulnerable groups are largely excluded by the media outlets. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, the analyzed groups are almost "invisible", and their voices are rarely included in the media coverage. In Turkey, although there is a considerable number of media items published about the analyzed groups, the pro-governmental approach is dominant in the media coverage. In addition to the above-cited general challenges in the media environment, the lack of journalists specializing in minority issues and human rights can be another reason of this "invisibility" or the negative representation of minorities and vulnerable groups. It should also be noted that, in the cases when media representation of displaced persons or refugees was analyzed, the media coverage on these groups was far more extensive than the minorities.

Even if the minorities and vulnerable groups are covered, media outlets of all four countries tend to refer to identity unnecessarily or when a criminal or other negative story is being reported. However, according to various media ethics codes discussed for all countries, the media should refrain from reference to the individual's race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, any physical or mental disorders and other characteristics of vulnerability unless there is necessity.

The media items that can be perceived as covering minorities in a positive key, do so predominantly building a positive image of "Us" or "Self" within the frames of multiculturalism, tolerance, and "brotherhood" in the country. In this

respect, these discourses perpetuate subordination and serve the opposite aim of polarization. For example, in Turkey "good Kurds" and "bad Kurds" came into prominence due to the discourses about "brotherhood". Similarly, in Azerbaijan and Armenia, "good" minorities are identified as patriots or brothers of the titular group, but not necessarily as equal citizens. Besides, in the Azerbaijani media, it is also seen that some minorities are identified as "separatists" that are susceptible to the influence of outside forces and that can become a tool in their hands. This framing, even though it was not directly observed in the monitored period, is also very common in the political and media discourses about "foreign forces" in Turkey.

Related to the above and yet another similar pattern is that the minorities and vulnerable groups become a subject matter in the media in relation to conflicts. For example, in Turkey, Kurds are referred to most of the time in association with terrorism; in Azerbaijan, displaced persons are always mentioned in relation with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; in Georgia, Abkhazians regularly become a subject matter in the context of the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict; in Armenia, Yezidis are recalled in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On the other hand, there is little or no media coverage of the rights or problems of the minorities and vulnerable groups and close to none on the cultural or routine life of these groups. Also, their voices are rarely heard directly.

Our monitoring of the selected media outlets for the defined period did not detect any major instances of hate speech except for the case against Armenians in Georgia discussed above. There were also some examples of hate speech produced by political actors and quoted by media outlets. Nevertheless, this situation does not mean that the media in these countries are totally free from hate speech. First, we should emphasize that a very limited period was evaluated in this research. Besides, all the media outlets that were selected for monitoring, are mainstream portals and generally are careful not to (re)produce hate speech in general. However, hate speech is still on the rise in the overall media sphere as demonstrated by research that specifically targets its manifestations. Moreover, if instances of outright hate speech are easily spotted, called out against, and therefore kept in check, discriminatory discourses are produced much more commonly. By definition, discriminatory discourses are less explicit than hate speech and are harder to detect. The findings of this research prove that the media in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey is not free from discriminatory discourses.

The comparison of the discursive representation of minorities and vulnerable groups in the media outlets in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey reveals recurring patterns and brings out shared problems. To address these problems, to contribute to a healthy media coverage of minorities and vulnerable groups, and to build an environment of interculturalism, we have developed joint recommendations for various actors.

Recommendations

Based on the identified challenges in this paper and taking into consideration the standards and principles of reporting on minority issues as well as the importance of proper representation of minorities and similar groups for building inclusive, peaceful, and integrated societies on the principles of interculturalism, the following recommendations have been drawn:

For media organizations and outlets, editors and journalists:

- Those media organizations and outlets that do not have their own ethics codes should elaborate such codes or editorial principles with specific clauses on standards of reporting on minorities and vulnerable groups that reflect national or international standards.
- Media organizations and outlets should join self-regulatory mechanisms and fully and actively participate in their effective enforcement.
- Editors and journalists should participate in capacity-building programs on rights-based journalism, including modules on the significance of the proper representation of minorities and vulnerable groups in the media as one of the means of building peaceful societies. If such programs are not offered, the establishment of in-house training mechanisms within media organizations and outlets can build and support the capacity of editors and journalists.
- Editors and journalists should work hard not to allow the stigmatization of minorities and vulnerable groups for the sake of curtailing demonization, polarization, and radicalization in the society.
- Editors and journalists should work hard towards covering contentious and critical themes related to minorities and vulnerable groups, bringing to light their grievances, giving them voice in expressing their problems and difficulties themselves.

- The editorial policy of media outlets should include the constant coverage of minorities and vulnerable groups, including their culture, daily life, problems and achievements, so that there is a greater societal awareness on diversity and difference. These policies should ensure that the quality of such coverage is high and that the audience will be willing to read, listen, watch, and engage with the topic.
- The editorial policy of media outlets should ensure the coverage of cultural, ethnic, and religious communities and vulnerable groups in a manner that reflects these communities' own perspectives and outlook.

The collision of the principle of the freedom of speech and the role the media can sometimes play in the (re)production of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization, puts the state institutions at a very delicate position. Therefore, for relevant state institutions, we recommend:

- On the one hand, state institution should refrain from any kind of limitation of the freedom of speech, as much as this principle is the cornerstone of a democratic society.
- On the other, due to the potential of the media to invoke violence and mobilize public opinion against different parts of the society, the state institutions should deploy comprehensive and clear mechanisms (legislation or administrative acts) and bodies to work against discrimination and hate speech.
- While mechanisms and bodies against discrimination and hate speech are necessary, governments should create conditions for media pluralism and refrain from all government control over the media. State institutions should support the establishment of fully neutral and independent self-regulating bodies and mechanisms.
- State institutions should support educational and capacity-building initiatives aimed at raising the standards of covering minorities and vulnerable groups in the media, leaving these initiatives independent from government influence.
- In their own communication in the media, state institutions should always underline the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusivity.

For independent media monitoring institutions, civil society, and activists:

- Institutions such as press councils, self-regulatory mechanisms and bodies, and media ombudspersons should mainstream issues of

minorities and vulnerable groups and their representation within their work.

- Independent monitoring institutions should concentrate on the identification of hate speech and discriminatory practices against minorities and vulnerable groups. They should also monitor and analyze the proper representation of these groups in the media.
- Civil society organizations and activists, alongside with the self-regulatory mechanisms and bodies, should join their forces in acting as societal observers of the conduct of media organizations and outlets.

For international organizations and donors:

- International organizations should liaison with the state institutions and media organizations to establish or improve national legislation on freedom of expression, anti-discrimination, and against hate speech; ethics codes; media standards and principles with effective enforcement mechanisms through self-regulatory bodies.
- International organizations should consistently be vocal and take action when governments pressure the media or when the media transgress international, national, or their own standards and principles.
- Donors should support monitoring and self-regulatory bodies and mechanisms in order to ensure sustainability and increase the trust of these actors within the media outlets.
- Donors should require their beneficiaries to implement editorial policies sensitive to minorities and vulnerable groups as well as to mainstream themes around these groups in their outlets.

For higher education institutions:

- Universities and colleges offering degrees for journalists and other media actors should adopt or develop curricula, syllabi, courses, or modules on diversity, peaceful coexistence, and sensitivities associated with the coverage of minorities and vulnerable groups.

Similar to education, the media is an institution that shapes every aspect of the public and private sectors. Nowadays, its function as an opinion-maker for the individual and the society booms as the simplicity of its access grows. The media can play an important role in the development of social cohesion and the promotion of peaceful coexistence of diverse groups or the contrary – the exacerbation of division lines. We have conducted this analysis and drawn these recommendations to contribute to the a more critical outlook to the role

of media in diversity management in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. The recommendations we endorse should be implemented with a vision of achieving a more pronounced media presence for the minorities and vulnerable groups; they should be able to actively participate in shaping the media in their societies and by extension the societies themselves.

Annex 1

We analyzed media items that included the following keywords:

	In the language of the media outlet	Translation into English
Armenia	սիրիահայ , եզդի	Syrian-Armenian, Yezidi
Azerbaijan[18]	qaçqın, qacqınlar, məcburi köçkün, (daxildəki) məcburi köçkünlər, ləzgi, ləzgilər	refugee, refugees, (internally) displaced person, internally displaced persons, Lezgi, Lezgis
	беженец, беженцы, (внутренне) перемещенное лицо/вынужденный переселенец, (внутренне) перемещённые лица/вынужденные переселенцы, лезгин, лезгины (for Haqqin.az)	
Georgia[19]	სომეხი, სომხები, აზერი, აზერები, აზერბაიჯანელი, აზერბაიჯანლები, რუსი, რუსები, მოლოკანი, მოლოკნები, მალაკანი, მალაკნები, დუხობორი, დუხობორები, დუხაბორი, დუხაბორები, ოსი, ოსები, აფხაზი, აფხაზები, ქისტი, ქისტები, ჩეჩენი, ჩეჩნები, ბოშა, ბოშები, ასურელი,	Armenian, Armenians, Azeri, Azeris, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijanis, Russian, Russians, Molokan, Molokans, Malakan, Malakans, Dukhobors, Dukhobors, Dukhabor, Dukhabors, Ossetian, Ossetians, Abkhaz, Abkhazians, Kist, Kists, Chechen, Chechens, Rom,

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[18] The keywords (both plural and singular) have been searched in a way to include all possible grammar cases.

[19] The keywords (both plural and singular) in Russian have been searched in a way to include all possible grammar cases.

	ასურელები, აისორი, აისორები, ასირიელი, ასირიელები, უდი, უდები, უდინი, უდინები, ავარი, ავარები, დაღესტნელი, დაღესტნელები, ლეკი, ლეკები	Roma, Assyrian, Assyrians, Aisori, Aisoris[20], Udi, Udis, Udin, Udins, Avar, Avars, Daghestanian, Daghestanians, Lak, Laks
Turkey	Suriyeli, Kürt	Syrian, Kurd

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[20] "Aisori" is a variation used for the Assyrian identity.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AKP – Justice and Development Party

CoE – Council of Europe

HDP – People's Democratic Party

IDP – Internally displaced persons

ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex

NGO – Non-governmental organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PKK – *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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